



IMPERIAL RULE



EDITED BY ALEXEI MILLER AND ALFRED J. RIEBER



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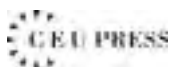
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IMPERIAL RULE

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Introduction: Imperial Rule

The present volume is the product of a project on the comparative history of empires launched in 2001 at the Central European University.¹ The individual contributions were originally presented in 2003 at an international conference in Moscow and revised in light of commentary and discussion during and after the conference. The project was designed as a contribution to the history of state building that has recently signaled a significant shift away from nationalism to a study of empires. In part the changing emphasis may be due to theoretical exhaustion following a period of richly diverse interpretations of the formation, development and crisis of the nation state. No doubt, too, it also reflects current interest in multi-unit formations such as the European Union and the appearance of transnational organizations, corporations and NGOs, and the emergence of new forms of imperial domination exemplified by the recent expansion of military, political and economic outreach by the United States. But there is also a growing recognition among historians, some of whom are represented in this book, that nationalism studies have exhibited a tendency to fall into an implicit teleology, or at least to overemphasize the linear progression of the nation state often in alliance with the concept of modernization, another paradigmatic teleology. To be sure, there have been recent attempts to pluralize these phenomena—nationalisms and modernizations (or multiple modernities)—in order to take into account different contexts and asymmetrical chronologies. But the underlying assumptions remain unshaken.

The present volume does not propose, however, a conceptual revolution, a radical paradigm shift, tempting as that may be, by claiming that nation narratives mask imperial aspirations, or more provocatively that all the major and some minor modern nation states were imperial enterprises.² Instead these essays argue for the need to complement rather than replace the national narratives. They represent one of several attempts to restore the balance in the history of state building by giving prominence to a phenomenon that we would prefer to call imperial rule instead of the traditional terms of empire and imperialism. Imperial rule as a term has the advantage of being both broader and more flexible and embraces different examples of the unequal relationship between the imperial center and peripheral

polities, whether by direct or indirect rule and with or without formal inclusion into an imperial structure.

The selection of the papers for publication reflects a twofold comparative perspective: first, to focus on four contiguous empires—Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman and Romanov to give them, not without purpose, their dynastic names; and second to introduce into the comparative analysis on an ad hoc basis additional continental and maritime empires. Regarding the first perspective, the interaction and mutual dependence of the four neighboring continental empires suggested the importance of treating them not only as distinctive units of comparison but also as a macrosystem. The specific characteristics of their entangled histories distinguish them from the competitive relationships of other continental and overseas empires.

Regarding the second perspective, comparing them with other continental empires (Iranian and Chinese) and maritime empires (Spanish, French, Portuguese and British) on specific issues like frontiers, economic growth, state and nation building can yield fresh insights into those processes.

While each of the following papers retains its own analytical rationale, collectively they illuminate a set of complex interactions that constitute the theoretical armature of the book and could serve as the framework for further comparative study of imperial rule. They may be summarized as follows: interaction of ideological, national, religious, population and frontier policies among empires; interaction of imperial and national ideologies within empires; interaction of different forms of legitimacy (*translatio imperii*); interaction of pragmatic and dogmatic methods of rule; interaction of core and periphery within and between empires.

In the four coterminous continental empires nationality policies were bound to have a reciprocal effect whereas they would have no effect at all upon maritime rivals. If Great Britain, for example, supported the struggle of mountain tribes in the Caucasus against the Romanov Empire, the decision would not influence its policy in the Northwest border province of India. There was no possibility for Russia to stir up Algerian nationalism versus the French in retaliation for French support for Polish independence. But if the Habsburg Empire sought to encourage the Polish or Ukrainian movement in the Russian Empire, then it would be obliged to adjust its policies toward its own Poles and Ukrainians. The unification of Germany by Prussia had profound effects on Russian policy in the western borderlands and plans for consolidating the Eastern Slavs into a single imperial nation. Similarly, it created serious problems of loyalty for the German population of the Habsburg Empire.

Another aspect of interaction among these empires was the movement of population either organized and carried out from above or taking more spontaneous forms from below. The contiguous borders of these empires were military frontiers, drawn and redrawn on the basis of conquest. They did not embody either natural or national principles. In order to secure

them imperial rulers frequently resorted to resettlement, deportation and colonization. Foreign and internal wars displaced peoples or stimulated their emigration to join their confreres, ethnic or religious. Examples abound: the migration of Russophile Rusyns from Galicia into the Russian Empire, Ukrainian nationalists from Russia to Galicia, Poles from the Russian to the German Empire and then their exclusion back again, Muslims from the Russian to the Ottoman Empire, German colonists into the Russian Empire. These movements strongly influenced the formation of separate cultural enclaves, in some cases also the identification processes in the areas from where the migration took place, and inevitably the political temper and politics of the imperial centers.

A similar pattern of interaction operated on the level of religious policies. The Romanov Empire posed as the protector of all Orthodox believers as the Porte claimed to play the same role with respect to Muslims. Yet both empires recognized that any attempt to launch an all out crusade or a jihad could lead to rebellion among Muslims or Christians respectively within their own borders. Repressive policies directed against Catholics in Germany (*Kulturkampf*, which particularly targeted Poles), anti-Polish politics towards Catholics and Greek-Catholics in Russia influenced Habsburg attitudes toward its Protestant, Greek Catholic and Orthodox populations.

Pan-ethnic ideologies, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Turkism resonated throughout four empires because they shared within their multi-cultural structures many of the same ethnic or religious elements. The supra-national ideologies had their origins within the Habsburg and Russian Empires, often among the minorities. Advocates of particular Pan-ethnic ideologies could be found in two or three of the contiguous empires, not always in disagreement with one another, but very often introducing different versions of such ideologies. Echoes of all three resonated well beyond the fall of the empires that had given birth to them. Their relative success or failure depended heavily on the political interactions taking place within the macrosystem of continental empires and the successor states.

A second set of interactions is connected with the internal relationship between nationalism and imperial rule. A number of authors conclude that both the dominant and subordinate peoples within the continental empires exhibited attributes of nationalism, but others focusing on maritime empires suggest an interesting corollary: most imperial cores of the maritime empires were in fact also empires, more or less successfully processed into nation states (Sebastian Balfour and Alexei Miller). Philipp Ther uses the concept of "nationalization of the imperial state," while Alexei Miller stresses different structure of nationalisms of the core and peripheral groups of empires. But the reverse was also often true; that is many nation-states underwent a process of "imperializing" although the phrase is not a felicitous one.

One of the major problems of studies of imperial rule is to separate

and identify the constituent elements of nation and empire in the building, maintenance and transformation of states and to analyze their dynamic relationship. What emerges from the following essays is the outline of a broad spectrum of that interaction. At one end is the Ottoman Empire where Turkish nationalism makes its appearance relatively late, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and is mainly reactive in the face of regional nationalism of the Balkan Slavs, but also of emerging nationalisms in the Arab provinces (Norman Stone, Sergei Podbolotov and Murat Yasar). In the Habsburg Empire Austro-German nation-building project does not manifest itself until after the Empire is destroyed, although Hungarian expansionist and homogenizing project of nation-building in Transleithania asserts itself early on in imperial history. In the Russian Empire Russian nationalism was also reactive. The German experience acted as an impulse and example for the Russian projects of nation building. But in the Russian Empire they took a plurality of forms as a result of the interaction between the nationalisms of the core imperial groups and those of the subaltern groups (Miller). At the other end of the spectrum, the nationalist impulse was so powerful in Germany and its mark on German historiography so profound, that it is only now that the imperial dimension is being fully recognized (Ther). The imbrication and interaction of national and imperial loyalties, ideologies and modes of representation throw into bold relief the third set of interactive processes illuminated by these essays—between different forms of legitimacy.

The object and exercise of legitimacy in empires were multiple, complex and dynamic. On the basis of the following essays we can infer four types of legitimacy: right of conquest, salvation of both a spiritual (messianic) and secular (civilizing mission) kind, welfare (economic benefits and religious toleration) and the cult of the ruler (emperor or sultan). Maciej Janowski points out the fallacy of an evolutionary model from traditional to modern modes of legitimacy. Interaction between medieval and nineteenth century practices and beliefs was more subtle and ambiguous. If there is any common thread wending its way through the varied and changing claims of legitimacy in all the continental empires it is the idea of *translatio imperii*. At every conjuncture of the interaction among legitimacies, history provided the ultimate sanction through the medium of myth, symbol and ritual.

The interaction of pragmatic and dogmatic modes of ruling shows up most clearly in the imperial policies toward religious minorities (Selim Deringil). There was clearly an inherent contradiction between the sacred character of the ruler—whether Habsburg Catholic, Russian Orthodox or Ottoman Islamic—and the extension of toleration to other religions, not to mention heresies and sects. In the Russian Empire, as Paul Werth points out, political considerations most often shaped imperial policies toward schismatics and sectarians. Much depended upon the extent to which reli-

gious dissenters were willing to accept their civic obligations. In the Habsburg Monarchy pragmatic considerations such as defense of the frontiers could also influence the imperial authorities to grant privileges to the Orthodox population in spite of opposition by the sacral repository of legitimacy, the Catholic Church. Similarly the Ottoman sultans reached a *modus vivendi* with their Christian subjects by establishing a millet system that was originally based on religion but later secularized enabling Christians to play a leading role in an Islamic Empire (Stone, Podbolotov and Yasar).

A final set of interactions focuses on core-periphery relations as the basis for comparison. This gives rise to two lines of analysis. The first explores the geo-political interaction between empires on the periphery and the core of the continent rather than making the traditional distinction between continental and maritime empires. The similar geo-strategic location of Russia and Britain with respect to the core powers of France, Austria and Germany on the one hand and the outer world on the other provided them with certain common problems and common interests. Yet the nature of their societies was fundamentally different and their responses to similar challenges equally so (Dominic Lieven). An unusual illustration of the interaction between the two empires was the Russian experience of transplanting a typical British institution, the colonial trading company, into the fabric of the Russian Empire (Ilya Vinkovetsky).

By shifting the focus in core-periphery relations to the role of frontiers, the units of comparison also change. Together with the three empires that form the core of our study, the Habsburg, Ottoman, Romanov, two other continental empires, the Iranian and Chinese, are included in a category called Eurasian. In this different constellation of empires, the interaction takes two forms: a contest among the empires for the intermediate space that separates them and constitutes their complex frontiers; and between the frontier societies and the centers of imperial authority (Alfred Rieber). The Spanish Empire occupies yet a third line of comparison, sharing important common features of core-periphery relations with both the dominant overseas empires of north-western Europe (a maritime type, but lacking their industrial and military capability) and the continental empires—Habsburg, Ottoman and Romanov by its dependent position vis-à-vis the core powers of European concert (Sebastian Balfour). Like other dimensions of imperial rule, these three illustrate the variety of insights into both the unique and shared experiences of empires that can be achieved by analyzing specific historical questions from a comparative perspective.

As the title of the book implies, the authors are agreed in rejecting any uniform definition or even of a strict typology of empires. The question being asked determines the imperial alignment. It should also be clear from these essays that national historical narratives of Germany, Spain or Russia (and one could easily add France and Britain) have systematically marginalized the imperial dimensions of their histories. Finally, the essays

suggest that empires were more adaptive and resilient to change than it has been commonly thought. The fact that the incantation of “decline and fall” is nowhere invoked should signal that a seismic shift is under way in the historiography pointing toward a further investigation of the elements of survival, renewal and adaptation of the patterns of imperial rule.

Budapest, March 2004

Alexei Miller
Alfred J. Rieber

NOTES

- 1 We would like to extend our gratitude to the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation) in Moscow, to the CEU Academic Research Fund for the financial support of the project, and to Lilya Bereznaya for administrative assistance. We should also mention that another set of articles presented at the conference, is being published in Russian: Alexei Miller, ed., *The Russian Empire in Comparative Perspective* (Moscow: Novoe izdatelstvo, 2004).
- 2 It should be mentioned, however, that if by “imperial project” we also understand the influence of the great powers on the process of formation of nation-states in the 19th and 20th centuries, then there is much truth in this point.

1. NATIONALISM AND IMPERIAL RULE

The Empire and the Nation in the Imagination of Russian Nationalism

ALEXEI MILLER

Notes on the Margins of an Article by A.N. Pypin

In 1885 the noted literary historian Aleksandr Pypin published an article in the *European Herald* (*Vestnik Evropy*), entitled “The Volga and Kiev.”¹ He begins it by recounting a conversation he once had with Ivan Turgenev, known for his mastery of the literary treatment of nature. In the course of the conversation it becomes clear that Turgenev has never been on the Volga. For Pypin this serves as a starting point for his argument that “Russian literature has not explored the Volga,” that “the Volga is absent in Russian painting as well” (188–189). “If we are truly so committed to the challenge of *samobytnost*’, the originality of the Russian nation and state, so dedicated to cherish what is ours, the native as opposed to the foreign, etc., then one of our primary concerns should be to know the native, at least its basic, most characteristic elements. The Volga, undoubtedly, is one of these elements” (193). Pypin expresses similar reproaches and regrets concerning Kiev: “A historian, a publicist, an ethnographer, an artist must see Kiev, if they want to imagine vividly Russian nature and the Russian people, since here again (as on the Volga—A. M.) are to be found some of the best examples of Russian nature and one of the most interesting aspects of the Russian nation... Kiev is the only place where one feels the Russian City as it was ages ago” (199–200).

To interpret these arguments correctly, we should pay attention to two other motifs present in the article. First, the Saratov-born Pypin is fully aware that “here, on the Volga, there is a mixture of ethnicity and blood” (196). He ridicules the attempts of some to “erase” all non-Russian nationalities: “That would be a task for a monomaniac, deserving of the well-known character of Shchedrin’s who asked, ‘Why the river?’” (211). In this article, as in his numerous other works, he protests against the repression of the Ukrainian language, and supports the right of the Little Russians to be different from the Great Russians, “the way the northern Frenchmen, Germans, and Italians are to the present day different from their southern counterparts.”

Second, having called the Volga and Kiev “characteristic native elements” that Russian art had not explored, Pypin contrasts them to the Caucasus, Crimea, and the Baltic provinces, popular with authors and

painters, but, in his opinion, lying outside the category of a “native element.” He writes sarcastically of Russian painters “who prefer to portray ‘the wind-mills of Estland’ or a heap of red-and-brown rocks labeled ‘Crimean studies,’ or something equally amusing” (190). In other words, from his standpoint, not all the imperial territory can be qualified as “the native, the Russian,” although he does not question the unity of the empire.

The ideological basis of Pypin’s text did not contain anything revolutionary or original; the article was fairly typical of the sentiments of educated Russian society. It is remarkable only for a full and systematic expression of a widespread point of view. We will return to it later in this article whose aim is to pinpoint the most general dimensions of the subject that has failed to receive due attention so far. The subject in question is the “mental maps” of Russian nationalism.



It is regrettable that too many historians underrate the ideas and sentiments, the whole discourse that Pypin’s article illustrates so well. When Rogers Brubaker wrote “nowhere is theoretical primitivism in the study of nationalism more striking than in the literature (and quasi-literature) on this subject,” what he had in mind was Eastern Europe and political science.² However, fresh perspectives on a range of problems dealing with Russian nationalism, and on the relationship between this nationalism and the empire that dominate today’s historiography, show convincingly that this criticism partly concerns historians as well.

Examples from several of the most recent publications make this clear. David Rowley in his article, comes to the conclusion that there is no basis for discussing Russian nationalism “in [the] generally accepted meaning” during the age of the Romanovs. The “generally accepted meaning,” for Rowley, is the definition of Ernest Gellner who stated that “nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent... Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A national *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind.” Consequently, Rowley concludes, “Russian nationalist resentment... could be manifested in two forms: either the Russian nation could draw a boundary around the territory in which Russians lived, and separate itself from all non-Russian territories, or it could seek to turn all the residents of the Russian state into members of the Russian nation. The first alternative would mean to disband the empire and to create a Russia of, by, and for its people. The second would mean the thorough enculturation with Russian ethnicity (Russification) of all peoples of the state.”³ In this passage Rowley clearly expresses and drives to their logical conclusion the theoretical theses that form the basis of many works on Russian nationalism.

The thesis that the Russians did not differentiate between the empire, the nation-state and the nation is repeatedly cited in various researches and leads many writers to conclude that the Russian nationalist program was limited to the clearly unrealistic project of transforming the empire into a nation-state. It is this thesis that Robert Kaiser, for one, employs when he writes that the “distinction between Russia the ancestral homeland—and Rossiya—the geographic extent of the Russian Empire lost clear meaning over the course of time,” and defines “the Russian nationalist vision” as “re-creating the Russian Empire as a Russian nation-state.”⁴ “The great question for Russian leaders during the nineteenth and twentieth century might be formulated as whether they could indicate an analogous (to British) compound national identity in their empire’s more diverse ethnic elements.” This is also the spirit about which Geoffrey Hosking writes in his book: “how the building of an empire impeded the formation of a nation.”⁵ “Imaginative geography: Russian Empire as a Russian nation-state” is both the title of a chapter and the subject of the entire recent book by Vera Tolz.⁶

But to what extent is Gellner’s definition of nationalism, on which all the quoted and many similar discussions are based, applicable in the Russian case? Nationalists inevitably ask what space their nation should occupy in terms of political control and as a “national territory.”⁷ In the case of non-imperial nations it can be said that a national territory encompasses what the nationalists believe to be “their” state ideally or “rightfully.” That is, a “national territory” and the space of political control are congruent. With imperial nations, these two categories of space may differ significantly. The point is that an effort to consolidate the nation, including a definition of the “national territory” within the empire, does not necessarily signal an intention to “disband” the empire.

It was exactly with view toward establishing imperial control over particular territories that most of the colonial wars were waged, not in order to include them into the “national territory.” The English attempted to establish the British identity only in one part of their empire—the British Isles. The French strove to do the same only in the European part of their empire. Of course, in Britain, France and even Spain, nationalism of the dominant nation had been marked by a considerably richer “heritage” than in Russia. The degree of society’s modernization and the extent to which the job of its cultural and linguistic homogenization had been already done by the ancient régime were significantly higher here compared to Russia. Even so, it would be quite erroneous to imagine that the colonial expansion was begun by full-fledged nation-states. The nation-states of the major maritime empires were being “completed” parallel to and in a close association with imperial expansion. If the “British identity,” as Linda Colley has demonstrated, was largely born out of the empire’s struggle against its enemies, the same holds true of other “imperial” nations, including Russia.⁸

Russian nationalism was also selective in its project. At the same time, for Russian nationalism, just as for French, British or Spanish nationalisms, an attempt to consolidate the nation was far from irreconcilable with an attempt to preserve and, given the opportunity, expand the empire. Gellner's formula of nationalism fits the experiences of the movements that tried to "cut" new states out of the existing ones, but it does not work in cases when a particular nationalism could adopt as its "own" an already existing state, including an empire.⁹

The Russians, regardless of the definition of this notion,¹⁰ were the central and most populous ethnic group of the empire. For a number of reasons, it is not quite correct, at least until the early 20th century, to call them a dominant group, in the sense that the British and the French dominated in their empires. The ruling dynasty had resisted "nationalization" longer than in the majority of the European states, the empire was dominated by a multiethnic gentry, and a Russian peasant for a long period of time could be, and often was, serf to a non-Russian, non-Orthodox, and even non-Christian nobleman. The nation did not "rule," and had no system of political representation.

On the other hand, the position of Russian as the official language of the empire had been constantly strengthened, Orthodoxy had a privileged status vis-à-vis other religions, the elite Russian culture in the 19th century was becoming increasingly more "complete" and adhering to European standards. Under these conditions, the Russian nationalists' desire to carry out a policy of Russification was not at all utopian in the sense that the Russians as a nation were supposed to occupy a dominant position in the Russian Empire, similar to the position of the French and the British in theirs. I am consciously leaving out of this article a great number of issues regarding the changes in the political system and forms of political mobilization necessary for such an undertaking. (It can be suggested that the most realistic way to such political modernization was through the establishment of a constitutional monarchy.) I would like to emphasize that it would be a mistake to consider, even before the creation of a system of political representation, that there was an impenetrable membrane between the public nationalist discourse and the imperial bureaucracy. If the Romanovs could seek out new sources of political legitimization of their power in nationalism, it could only be Russian nationalism, and the Romanovs' "official nationalism"¹¹ inevitably had to search for common ground with the Russian nationalism of the public. The process was slow, fraught with resistance and internal contradictions, but the ruling elite gradually accepted certain elements of the Russian nationalist ideology, which by the mid-19th century had already begun to motivate its policies.¹²

Richard Wortman wrote recently that "the task of the historian is to understand Russian nationalism as a field of constant struggle, contestation. This struggle began in the 19th–early 20th century between monar-

chy and the educated part of society when, in their fight to control the state, each of the two sides sought the right to represent the people.”¹³ In this truly incessant fight there were other frontlines, differently drawn, there were subjects for argumentation, in which a part of educated society formed or sought to form a union with the state power against another part of that educated society. This is what often happened in the discussions of Russian-ness and of the borders of the Russian “national territory.”

In these arguments the supporters of the identification of the Russian Empire with the Russian nation-state and the consequent, truly utopian drive to Russify the entire population of the empire invariably involved a minority among Russian nationalists. Also in a minority were those who were prepared to equate Russians and Great Russians and to accept the traditional area of the Great Russian population as the national territory.¹⁴

The obvious distinction of the Russian Empire compared to the British, French and Spanish Empires was its continental character, the absence of the “great water” between core and periphery. That created, understandably, difficulties for “imagining the national territory” within the empire, but opened up certain possibilities as well.

Compared to other continental powers, the problem of the relationship between Russian nationalism and empire also had a number of specific features. All its problems notwithstanding, 19th-century Russia continued territorial expansion and preserved the level of military power, economic potential and faith in the future that made foreign dictate and dissolution of empire hypothetical threats rather than everyday factors, as it was in the Ottoman Empire. Of course, by the time Russian nationalism occupied a certain public space and took the opportunity to advance its cause in the course of the reforms of the early years of Alexander II’s reign it was as an imitative reaction to the challenge of the more developed nationalisms of Europe and the humiliation of the Crimean War.¹⁵ But this nationalism was not a reaction to the unavoidable disintegration of empire, already underway, as was the nationalism of the Young Turks. This was not a project aimed at minimizing the damage or salvaging what could still be saved, as in the Turkish case.

Russia was different from the Habsburg Empire in that its feudal tradition in shaping imperial space was significantly less powerful. Russia had no Pragmatic Sanction that firmly fixed the borders of the “Crown Lands” and the rights of the local noblemen’s Diets. Only the Kingdom of Poland, Finland and, to an extent, the Ostzee province had, during certain periods, a status comparable to that of the Habsburg crown lands (*Länder*). In the Habsburg monarchy the demographic balance between different ethnic groups and the peculiarities of the political development had led to a point where, in Cisleithania, the expansionist project of building a dominant German nation did not play any important role at all. If in the Habsburg monarchy the borders of the feudal crown lands became the basis for “ter-

ritorialization of ethnicity” already in the 19th century, in the Russian Empire the corresponding processes were very limited, and territorialization of ethnicity began widely, based on different principles, only in the USSR.¹⁶

Thus, the Russian nationalist project of national consolidation within the empire, which implied “appropriation” of a certain part of the imperial space as the “Russian national territory,” had existed for a longer time than analogous projects in the Ottoman or Habsburg Empires. (Only the Hungarians in Transleithania, during a comparable period, attempted to actualize a similar project using the situation that had come into being with the adoption of the law on the exclusive rights of the Hungarian language in the lands of St. Stephen’s Crown in 1844 and the compromise agreement of 1867.)

The nationalist “appropriation” of territory motivated by Russian nationalism was a process, not an act. This process had several important components. First of all, the debates on “Russian-ness,” on the criteria according to which an individual, group or territory belonged to Russia, had a truly ferocious character up until the collapse of the empire.

Second, Russian nationalism had a great potential toward expanding the “national territory” and in a number of ways met with fewer obstacles in this expansion than the analogous projects in the continental Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. But, I will stress again, this did not mean that Russian nationalism, or to be exact, its discursively predominant versions, contained an attempt to encompass the whole empire as the “national territory.”¹⁷ In essence, the very tension of the debates on the limits of Russian-ness and the criteria of belonging to it serve as a convincing proof that the Russian project of nation-building, while expansionist, was not aimed at encompassing the whole empire and all its subjects.

By the nationalist appropriation of space I mean a symbolic, imagined geography. The subject is a complex web of discursive practices that included ideological motivation, symbolic, toponymic, artistic exploration of and familiarization with a particular space in such a way as to make the public conscience aware of this space as part of its “own,” “national” territory.



Let us return to Pypin’s article “The Volga and Kiev.” When he discusses the means of developing and affirming the idea of a “native” land among Russians, the present-day reader may get an impression that Pypin has recently read the second, expanded edition of Benedict Anderson’s book or some other modern research that deals with the “imaginative component” of nationalism. Having mentioned, *in passim*, as self-evident, “the institutions, economic ties, railroad building, higher education,” Pypin writes in more detail about instruments of nurturing an emotional attachment: on museums; on the historical narrative; on “travel literature,” in-

cluding both fiction and guidebooks, on ethnography and “regional fiction of everyday life, the models for which were given by Melnikov (thanks to his semi-ethnographical background);” on landscape and local types in painting. Failures in this area seem especially dangerous to him because the great distances and the high cost of travel do not allow Russians as effectively as Germans and others to use the “experience of learning about one’s homeland” through organized travel of the “student youth” (197).¹⁸ “Our fatherland is so expansive, so varied, that a love for this entirety, which very few have seen in its boundless expanse, is only possible through the closest idea of local homeland... Ordinary people’s sense of belonging to the whole is created through an idea of ‘Russian’ land and people, and through the notion of one faith, one authority” (206). “Without such literature, without other studies of Russian nature and life of the people, our so-called ‘self-consciousness’ will remain a boring phrase,” he writes in conclusion (215). Pypin is obviously responding to the sentiments and discussions of Russian national self-consciousness that was widespread in the society of the day, and seeks to attract the reader’s attention to the “instruments” used in nations that were more successful in nurturing an emotional attachment to the “native land.”



It was only very recently that the subject of “imaginary geography” began to attract Russian history experts in any way.¹⁹ It was also recently that researchers realized the necessity of once again analyzing the multiplicity of processes that hide behind the notion of Russification.²⁰ The problem of differentiating between various processes of Russification in the imperial and nationalist sense, let alone the essence of these processes and methods of their discursive representation, remains under-researched. This is why all the following statements should be treated as working hypotheses, and the quotations should not be taken as proof (for that, they must become part of greater samples), but only as illustrations.

Russian nationalism was developing ideologically and formulated its image of a national territory in encounters with other nationalisms of the empire. The methods of definition and exploration of a particular space as a “national territory,” the sets of arguments and images employed in this discourse were significantly different depending on the situation and the type of challenge that Russian nationalism faced in the empire’s various peripheries.

Arguably, this set of problems has been explored most consistently in the studies of the Western province and “its neighborhood.” In this area, the Russian nationalist project was initially formulated in a violent confrontation with the Polish project, which began by defending the 1772 borders as a “Polish property,” and was later ready to join forces with the Ukrainian movement against the empire and Russian nationalism. Ukrain-

ian nationalism that entered this contest in the mid-19th century with its own project of a “national territory” to a great extent borrowed forms and methods of ideological struggle from its more powerful competitors.

Little Russia and the Western borderland were predominantly populated by East Slavs who, within the concept of the “all-Russian nation” were considered branches of the Russian people. The colonization of this space by the Great Russian population did not play any important role. The main emphasis was precisely on the notion that all East Slavs belong to the united Russian nation. It was in the context of polemics with Ukrainian nationalists that the Little Russian nobleman and Russian nationalist M.V. Yuzefovich first formulated the slogan that received such wide currency in the early 20th century, but already in a different sense. By a “united and indivisible Russia” Yuzefovich did not mean the empire in its entirety, but exactly the Russian nation in its “all-Russian” version.

In the 19th century, the space and population of the Western province became targets of a raging war of words where, it seems, there was no place name or ethnic group name that would be ideologically neutral. Each one of them either reaffirmed or rejected a particular nation-building project.²¹

As in other similar discourses, appealing to an old tradition of statehood had an important role to play, that of Kievan Rus in the Russian case. Clearly, it was in the Western part of the empire and its “neighborhood” that this motif was exploited most rigorously. The interpretation of Kievan Rus as the crucible of the Russian nation was providing a foundation for the traditional motif of “the ancestral land,” a land that is “truly Russian.”

The concept of Kievan Rus as “the crucible of the Russian people” went well with the dynastic logic. Thus, the famous dictum by Catherine the Great, after the partitions of the Polish Commonwealth, that “we only took what is ours,” can well be interpreted both as dynastic (ours as belonging to the Rurik dynasty whose heir she considered herself) and as nationalist—that is, the lands of Kievan Rus, predominantly populated by East Slavs, all of whom were considered Russian in the dominant version of the Russian nationalist discourse. I will point to deviations from this concept, which show that “correct” formulas were not found immediately. One example is the polemic between M.P. Pogodin and M.A. Maksimovich in the mid-1850s, wherein Pogodin was arguing for the preferred historical rights to Kiev of the Great Russians as compared with the Little Russians.²² But this motif gave way to the interpretation of Kiev and its historical heritage as the common root and common property of all East Slavs, which was quite logical in view of the goals being pursued by the discourse.

It is interesting to look at the combination of the subject of Kievan Rus and the subject of Moscow. Moscow as the contemporary “heart,” the embodiment of Russian-ness, as the center of “collecting” the Russian lands was undoubtedly present in the Russian nationalist discourse. In the

traditionalist version of Russian nationalism, it was Muscovy that was contrasted to St. Petersburg's Russia. But the historical boundaries of Muscovy did not "work," or else they were perceived as a tool in the adversary discourses, defining clearly unacceptable boundaries to which her enemies want to reduce Russia.²³

By the mid-19th century we can already find instances of the influence of the notion of the "Russian national territory" over the highest bureaucratic echelons. For example, in 1863 V.I. Nazimov, the then governor-general of the Northwest province, which included both Belorussian and Lithuanian lands, was making a clear distinction in his Russification program between the "centuries old Russian" lands (*iskonno russkie zemli*) and localities with traditional domination of Lithuanians and Jews. It was not only the contemporary demographic situation that he used as a basis for this differentiation. Nazimov points out particular places with a predominantly Jewish population that should be given back their "Russian" character, and immediately specifies that neighboring places should be "left as is," since the Slavic population was never predominant there.²⁴

His image of a national territory was selective in the sense that it did not include either all the lands of the Western province, or all of its population. One is reminded of the letters of Katkov to Alexander II and Alexander III, in which he repeatedly discusses the benefits of giving Poland independence "in its ethnographical boundaries."²⁵ Katkov was not alone in his sentiments. From the Russian nationalist viewpoint, the empire's Western periphery was thus divided into three categories of lands: first, the "truly Russian;" second, the Lithuanian lands that were not included in the image of the Russian national territory but were a desired part of the empire; and, finally, the ethnically Polish lands that, ideally, would have to be "expelled" from the empire as an undesirable, incorrigibly alien and hostile part.

At the same time, the logic of this discourse was pushing the boundaries of the "Russian national territory" beyond the empire's borders, into the provinces of the Habsburg Empire populated by East Slavs. The discourse of *Chervonaia* (Red) Rus (Eastern Galicia) and *Uhorskaia* (Hungarian) or *Karpatskaia* (Carpathian) Rus (Bukovina and the present-day Transcarpathian Ukraine) was different in principle from the general Panslavist discourse on the Slavs of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. It was, in essence, a discourse of nationalist irredenta. Pypin, for instance, was not a Panslavist, but in the article "The Volga and Kiev" he deemed it necessary to write about the plight of the "south-Russian people in Galicia" (211). Already in the 19th century, the Russian nationalists repeatedly criticized "Catherine's mistake;" she left the "Russian" population of East Galicia to the Austrian Empire where it remained "under the Polish rule."

Thus, according to this vision, the "truly Russian lands" were divided into three types: the "well-accommodated," that is those where their Russian character was well established²⁶; and the "ailing," that is those that re-

quired the elimination of hostile influences, and, finally, the ones that remained “torn away,” i.e. not included in the empire, and, as a result, into national body.

This discourse remained in force up until the collapse of the empire. When in 1911 the creation of the Kholm (Chelm) gubernia was discussed in the Duma (that is, moving Kholmshchina (Chelm region) out of the Kingdom of Poland). V.A. Bobrinskii II argued that this territory should be “in the uncontested national possession not of Russia—everything here is Russia—but of Rus, so that this field would be not only a part of the Russian state, but be universally recognized as an ancient Russian land, that is Rus.”²⁷ This did not prevent Bobrinskii from admitting that the population of *Kholmshchina* was deeply colonized. But this fact served as an argument in favor of urgent steps to “save” “its original Russian nature,” not altogether lost. “This is an exceptionally sickly, tormented Russian land, and so it is singled out to treat it with a particular attention and care.”²⁸ The image of the national body, different from the empire and a sick part of that body—sick precisely as a part of the national body, not the empire—the symbolic of Russian nationalism comes through here with an absolute clarity.²⁹

A vivid illustration of evolution and, simultaneously, resilience of this discourse at the empire’s breaking point can be found in the files of the Special Political Section (*Osobyi Politicheskii Otdel*) of the Foreign Ministry. Its personnel and consultants during World War I were working on ideological foundations for the annexation of *Chervonaia Rus* (Red Russia) and *Ugorskaia Rus* (Hungarian Rus). The Section was preparing its last memoranda already for the Bolsheviks, and continued to defend the concept of an all-Russian nation by condemning both the Tsars and the Kaisers for its dismemberment and referring to the right “of the working people to self-determination.”³⁰

One important aspect of the subject is the relationship between the religious and ethnic factors in the Russian nationalist discourse. On the Western peripheries, in the context of the Russian–Polish rivalry, the emphasis on the opposition of Orthodoxy and Catholicism was very strong. At the same time, it can be observed that with time the religious factor in the nationalist rhetoric begins to yield to the ethnic factor. In the reign of Alexander II the authorities already begin to gradually incline towards the point of view that even the Catholic Belorussians belong to the Russian nation.³¹ On the eve of the second occupation of Galicia during World War I, the Special Political Section of the Foreign Ministry prepared guidelines according to which the Russian authorities in Galicia should not show any difference in their treatment of the Orthodox and the Uniates (Greek-Catholics).³²

It would be in vain to search, in any period of late-imperial history, for an ideological consensus in Russian society on the issue whether a

Catholic Belorussian or children of mixed Russian–Polish marriages could be regarded as Russian, just as it would be to determine where exactly the western territorial boundaries of the “Russian land” should be drawn and whether or not it was necessary to annex East Galicia and Hungarian Rus. The list of these controversial, debatable questions is long. Just as long is the list of differing opinions on what degree of regional peculiarity could be tolerated among Little Russians (Malorussians) and White Russians (Belorussians). These debates were waged in the press, among the bureaucracy, and later in the Duma, too. But, significant differences of opinion notwithstanding, the motif of incongruity of the empire and the “Russian national territory” is evident to everyone. The discourse of the national project undoubtedly influenced policy planning for the Western provinces.



Under different conditions of another “characteristic element” that Pypin writes about—in the Volga region—the interpretation of the ethnic factor was different. The historical myth did not play a crucial role here. If the position of Moscow as the heir to Byzantium and Kievan Rus was actively used in the nationalist discourse, the motif of succession to the Golden Horde remained, “was not required”, up until the emergence of Eurasianism. Pypin only remarks *in passim* that “the Volga has long been known to the Russian tribe,” that “Russian adventurers and industrialists” had appeared here before “the Tatar invasion.” Discussing the Russian colonization of the region after the 16th century, he notes, by the way, that both Great Russians (*velikorusy*) and Little Russians participated in it (190–191).³³

In the Western peripheries, the nationalist discourse emphasized the East-Slav character of the nation and, while marking Little Russians and White Russians as Russians, was exclusive rather than inclusive. In debates with their Polish opponents, Russian nationalists put an emphasis on the commonality of the ethnic origins of the East Slavs, and, not denying completely, in any case did not accentuate the non-Slavic components of the Russian people.

In the highly ethnically mixed Volga region of the 19th century the Russians, as the result of migrations, already made up a little more than half of the population, both in the cities, and generally in the country.³⁴ Pypin stressed an openness to the non-Slavic, especially Finno-Ugric, element.³⁵ He wrote in the same article that the Great Russian tribe was “not purely Slavic, but mixed,” and speaks of its “Slavic–Finnish base.” The authorities and Russian nationalism not only did not see anything wrong with intermarriages, but also perceived this mixture as an indelible part of the Russian nation-formation.³⁶

A student of Kazan University and a Chuvash, in 1870, I. Ya. Yakovlev wrote in a report to the trustee of the Kazan School District P.D. Sheshtakov:

“It seems to me that a Russification or assimilation of the Chuvash with the Russian people can only be reached in three ways: the first, and most important, is through their adoption of Orthodoxy—everyone knows what importance our ordinary folk ascribe to a difference of faith. Secondly, through conjugal unions; and thirdly, through the learning of Russian by the Chuvash.”

It is perfectly clear that Yakovlev does not have the slightest doubt that not only adoption of faith and language, but also intermarriage of the Chuvash and Russians would not raise any objections from his addressee.³⁷

Comparatively small in numbers, devoid of modernized elites, the people of the Volga region were not regarded as a serious threat to the Russian national project or the unity of the Russian national territory. “I suppose that such petty, isolated nationalities cannot maintain a stable existence, and will finally fuse with the Russian people through the historical course of life itself. It has been noticed that educated aliens (*inorodtsy*) marry Russians, thus becoming akin to Russians, there is no doubt about that,” wrote N.I. Ilminskii to K.P. Pobedonostsev on April 21, 1891.³⁸

Already in the 1850s, however, Ilminsky, under the influence of V.V. Grigorev, construes the rise of the Tatar elites and Islam in the Volga and Urals regions as a major threat to the Russian nation-building, as an alternative project of Islamic–Tatar unity.³⁹ Within the framework of the new nationalist vision, the mediative role of the Tatars in regards to the eastern peoples of the empire, formerly endorsed by the authorities, was now seen as a menace. Regarding, not without reason, the current Russian-Orthodox assimilation project as weaker than the Tatar–Islamic one, Ilminsky and his followers resort to the tactic of supporting separate, specific ethnic identities of the peoples of the Volga and Urals regions and create alphabets for each of their languages. Even a preservation of paganism in this context is an option preferred to a possible Islamization.⁴⁰

In recent years, a number of researchers have noted a structural similarity of conflicts in the Western province, the Baltic province, and the Volga–Urals region—everywhere the authorities and Russian nationalists were concerned about competition with ethnic groups that possessed a powerful assimilating potential and were capable of carrying out their own nation-building projects. They were Poles in the Western province, Germans in the Baltic, and Tatars on the Volga. This approach allows for important insights in the history of these imperial peripheries. But the differences in these conflicts from the Russian nationalist perspective should also be taken into account. The Russian nationalist project in the Western

provinces included most of its territory, on the Volga—the entire region, and the Baltic provinces was left out of it completely. Ilminskii's strategy had a difficult time being accepted. In the Western provinces, the effort to prevent the formation of separate national identities of Belorussians and Ukrainians, as well as the endorsement of the formation of a specific Lithuanian national identity, came quite logically out of the all-Russian nation project. It was likewise comparatively easy to support the formation of Latvian and Estonian national identities to block the threat of "Germanization" in the Ostsee province, which was not included into the image of the Russian national territory. The Volga region, on the other hand, was completely included into the image of the Russian national territory, and here the paradoxical logic of Grigorev and Ilminskii that presupposed a temporary strengthening of the small peoples' identities for the sake of fighting the more active Tatar-Islamic project caused much misunderstanding and criticism.⁴¹

If the demographic situation on the Volga was the result of many centuries of the colonization process, a number of territories in the regions that Pypin does not count among "typically Russian" were already populated by Russians in the 19th century. In the northwest Caucasus and in Central Asia, the authorities resorted to the strategy of "demographic conquest" of individual regions, which was motivated primarily by the logic of the military strategic competition among the great powers or intended to subjugate the population of the conquered territories.⁴² In some cases this Russification of space, "imperial" in its logic and goals, led to the eventual inclusion of these territories into the symbolic geography of Russian nationalism, in others it did not. In which way and how long did it take for imperial Russification to establish the predominance of Russian population in certain areas as a result of directed forced migration or expulsion beyond the imperial borders of the native population, and in this way to "appropriate" gradually these areas by means of imaginative geography to the Russian national territory? This question still awaits its researcher.

In any case, it is evident that the inclusion of a particular territory in the empire and even its occupation by Russian settlers did not imply by itself that this space became part of the Russian national territory in terms of symbolic geography. The tactics of "nationalist appropriation" of certain parts of the imperial territory differed according to the situation and challenges. In the Western provinces, it presupposed the inclusion of a huge mass of the native population as "Russian," on the Volga—a fragmentation of non-Russian ethnic identities to enforce the dominant position of the Russians in the region, in Siberia—the change of territorial status from colonial to that of "homeland," etc.

It is difficult to assess from the 21st century just how successful and far-advanced Russian nationalism carried out the project of consolidating of the Russian national territory. The results of these efforts were severely

tested in the course of World War I, the revolution and the civil wars on the imperial territory, and then in some cases were “cancelled,” in others reinforced within the framework of the Soviet policy of ethnic territorialization.⁴³ Whatever the case, better understanding of the “mental maps” of Russian and competing nationalisms in the Romanov Empire can provide insights into the logic of imperial rule in late imperial Russia, as well as new comparative perspectives.

NOTES

- 1 A. Pypin, “Volga i Kiev,” *Vestnik Evropy* (July 1885): 188–215. Further references to the article in the text list the relevant pages in brackets.
- 2 R. Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism” in J. A. Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation. Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272–306, here 302.
- 3 D. Rowley, “Imperial versus National Discourse: The Case of Russia,” *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (2000): 23–42, quotations from 24, 25.
- 4 R. J. Kaiser. *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 85.
- 5 G. Hosking, *Russia. People and Empire. 1552–1917* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1997), xix, xxi.
- 6 V. Tolz, *Inventing the Nation. Russia* (London: Arnold; New York: Co-published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press, 2001), 155.
- 7 I use the terms “national territory” and “ideal homeland” to denote the nationalist ideas of what space should belong to the nation “rightfully”—exactly as a nation, as “our land.” All kinds of arguments are advanced in support of this right—from the factual present-day demographic situation to the “historical right” (“our ancestors lived here”), to references to the blood shed by “our soldiers” on this land, etc. See A. Miller, “Konflikt ‘ideal’nykh otechestv,” *Rodina* 8 (1999): 79–82.
- 8 L. Colley, *Britons: Forging a Nation, 1707–1837* (London: Pimlico, 1992). See also the recent book by H. Kamen, *Spain’s Road to Empire. The Making of a World Power* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003) for the argument that the Spanish nation was a product of its empire: “We are accustomed to the idea that Spain created its empire, but it is more useful to work with the idea that the empire created Spain” (quoted in R. Wright, “For a wild surmise,” *TLS* (December 20, 2002): 3.
- 9 On the inapplicability of Gellner’s model to the British case, see B. Wellings, “National and imperial discourses in England,” *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (2002): 95–109.
- 10 The notion of “Russian-ness” has been far from equivocal, and the discussions over this notion have constituted an important element in the Russian nationalist discourse.
- 11 On the notion of “official nationalism” of the ruling dynasties, see B. Anderson. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991).
- 12 See, e.g., Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question. The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*. (Budapest—New York: CEU Press, 2003). chapters 4, 5.

- 13 Quoted from R. Wortman, "Natsionalizm, narodnost' i rossiiskoe gosudarstvo," *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 17:3, (2001).
- 14 This is how this movement in the early 1870s is described by M. Dragomanov who had his own reasons to overrate its influence: "This is truly what our ultra-Russian party, rather numerous among educated people in the capitals and in Great Russia, is all about; this new species of 'Great Russian separatists' says: God take care of those peripheries; we, the true Russians, on the true Russian soil, are still 30–40 million strong, we will mind our own business, and let the peripheries live as they will! Of course, if those 'ultra-Russians' were left without Riga and Warsaw, or, God forbid, without Vilno and Kiev, they would feel a certain discomfort... But this ultra-Russian separatism of the people of middle Russia is perfectly understandable and natural as a reaction against the trend that cares so awkwardly about tribal russification and re-russification..." (M. Dragomanov, "Vostochnaia politika Germanii i obrusenie," *Vestnik Evropy* (May 1872): 239. Dragomanov was a Ukrainian, not Russian, nationalist, but he was a nationalist–federalist at that, and, all things considered, he was quite sincere when he argued for the unity of the empire which he, in the 1870s, attempted to "reform together with the Great Russians." (K. Studin'skii, "Lysty Dragomanova do Navrots'kogo," *Za sto lit* 1 (Kharkiv–Kiiv, 1927): 135.
- 15 On the formation of the space for a Russian nationalist discourse in this period, see A. Renner, *Russischer Nationalismus und Öffentlichkeit im Zarenreich* (Köln: Böhlau, 2000).
- 16 See T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Iu. Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53:2 (Summer 1994): 414–452; R.J. Kaiser. *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*. (Princeton, NJ, 1994). Unlike historians who emphasize a continuity of the process of the territorialization of ethnicity in imperial Russia and the USSR (see D. Brower, E. Lazzerini, "Introduction" in D. Brower, E. Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient. Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xix, I consider it important to stress exactly the difference in principle between the late imperial policies and the Russian nationalist discourse on territoriality, on the one hand, and the Soviet policy of territorialization and institutionalization of ethnicity, on the other.
- 17 Further in this article I will demonstrate, using P.B. Struve as an example, what role the image of the "national territory" played even in the ideology of someone who supported transformation of the whole empire into a nation-state.
- 18 Imagined travels of this sort had long been used as a teaching tool in geography textbooks, but actual educational travel in Russia only began in the early 20th century. See M. V. Loskoutova. "A Motherland with a Radius of 300 Miles: Regional Identity in Russian Secondary and Post-Elementary Education from the early Nineteenth Century to the War and Revolution," *European Review of History* 9:1 (2002): 7–22.
- 19 As far as I can tell, the pioneering work in this direction was done by Mark Bassin in the early 1990s.
- 20 See the list of literature in A. Miller, "Russifikatsii, klassifitsirovat' i poniat'," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2002). The term "russification" itself is extremely polysemic, it is more correct to speak of various "russifications."
- 21 For more detail, see: A. Miller, *The Ukrainian Question...*
- 22 *Russkaia beseda* 4 (1856): 137.
- 23 In this regard, some very telling differences should be pointed out in the quoted works of Kaiser, Hosking and Rowley. To the first author, the empire's opposing number is an "ancestral land" (it is not clear whether he has in mind Muscovy

or still the Kievan Rus' of the Russian national myth); to the second, it is "Rus'" quoted from G. Gachev, who, in fact, writes in a Slavophilic vein about a break in the "Moscow tradition" by the Petrine reforms. For the third, it is the territory populated by Russians, which, even if we limit Russians to Great Russians only, was not compact to begin with, and which, by the 19th century, expanded far beyond the Urals.

- 24 GA RF (State Archive of Russian Federation), f. 109, op. 38, 1863, item 23, pt. 175.
- 25 What these arguments finally led to was the conclusion of impossibility of such a step precisely because the Poles were demanding the boundaries of 1772, that is, because of irreconcilable differences between the images of "ideal homelands." But the addressees and a private character of these letters suggest that these arguments were not a polemical trick of an imperialist who does not intend to surrender any of the empire's possessions and who looks for a "decent excuse." Neither Alexander II nor, especially, Alexander III needed convincing that the Kingdom of Poland was their possession. More likely, they were musings of a Russian nationalist who, under certain circumstances, would be ready to sacrifice part of the imperial territory to create more beneficial conditions for the realization of the Russian nationalist project.
- 26 That was the way Ivan Aksakov saw the Left-Bank Ukraine and Novorossia in the 1860s; he suggested that particular districts of the South-Western province be included, for their "sanation," into these gubernias. See I. Aksakov. "Ob izmenenii granits Zapadnogo kraia" in I.S. Aksakov, *Sochineniia*, vol. 3, *Pol'skii vopros i zapadno-russkoe delo. Evreiskii vopros. 1860–1886* (St. Petersburg, 1900), 265–266. He suggested similar measures for the Northwest province as well. It should be noted that his arguments are always presented within the framework of the Russian nationalist discourse; his main criterion is "more of the Russian public element" (p. 267). (First published in *Den'* (26 October 1863)).
- 27 *Gosudarstvennaia Duma, 3-ii sozyv. Stenograficheskie otchety 1911 g., Sessia V, Chast' 1. Zasedanie 30, 25 December 1911* (St. Petersburg, 1911), 2745.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 2746.
- 29 It is in connection with the Western peripheries that it becomes possible to trace how the discourse of the national territory was reflected in the concepts of such a consistent Russian imperialist as P.B. Struve prior to and during the First World War. He begins his article "Great Russia and Holy Rus'" with the statements that "Russia is a nation-state," that "expanding its nucleus geographically, the Russian State has turned into a state that, while multiethnic, at the same time possesses a national unity" (*Russkaia mysl'* 12 (1914): 176–180). It is exactly these quotations that are often presented to argue that nation-state and empire have conflated in Russian perception. Meanwhile, in the same article Struve speaks of a "national nucleus state," in which "Russian tribes melted into a single nation." He notes the ability of this national nucleus to expand, and differentiates it from imperial expansion. The connection of various peripheries to the "state-national nucleus" could be, according to Struve, "purely or predominantly a state matter," or, possibly, that of "state and culture, leading in its final development up to the complete assimilation, russification of the 'aliens.'" Struve's ideal is, of course, a gradual expansion of the nation-state to fill the boundaries of the imperial state, based on "the law and a representative political system," but he, first of all, clearly sees the differences between them, and second, understands his ideal as a distant perspective. Some time earlier, in his polemic with Ukrainian nationalism, Struve repeatedly used the formula "a

Russian Russia,” meaning exactly the “all-Russian nation.” (P.B. Struve, “Obshcherusskaia kul’tura i ukrainskii partikuliarizm,” *Russkaia mysl’* 1 (1912): 68, 82.

Thus, the very idea of a Russian national territory is manifested even in the ideology of the liberal imperialist Struve. When Struve goes on to formulate the goals of Russia in the war, it turns out that the most important task, in his opinion, is to “reunite and melt together with the empire all parts of the Russian people,” that is the annexation of the “Russian Halychina.” Here he resorts again, as is generally typical of the nationalist discourse of organic unity, to the metaphor of sanation of the national body, proving that the annexation of Halychina is necessary for the “internal sanation of Russia, since the life of a Malorossian tribe under Austrian rule has generated and given support here to the so-called ugly ‘Ukrainian question.’” The second task, from Struve’s standpoint, is to “regenerate Poland as a single national organism.” And the control over the straits comes only third. Thus, in this hierarchy Struve places first and second the tasks that come directly from the nationalist discourse, and does not bother to substantiate them as obvious, concentrating instead on why the Russian empire still needs Constantinople.

- 30 See A. Miller, “A Testament of the All-Russian Idea: Foreign Ministry Memoranda to the Imperial, Provisional and Bolshevik Governments” in M. Siefert, ed., *Extending the Borders of Russian History. Essays in Honor of Alfred Rieber* (Budapest—New York: CEU Press, 2003).
- 31 See Th. Weeks, “Religion and Russification: Russian Language in the Catholic Churches of the Northwest Provinces After 1863.” *Kritika* 2:1 (2001): 87–110; Th. Weeks, “My ili oni? Belorusy i rossiiskaia vlast’, 1863–1914” to be published in P. Werth, P. Kabytov, A. Miller, eds., *Rossiiskaia imperia v zapadnoi istoriografii*, Moscow, 2004; D. Staliunas, “Mozhet li katolik byt’ russkim? (O vvedenii russkogo iazyka v katolicheskoe bogoslužhenie v 60-e gody 19 v.)” to be published *ibid*.
- 32 A. Miller, “A Testament...”
- 33 Subsequently, the Russian discourse adopts the subject of colonization as an instrument of nation-building in the sense that the differences between Great Russians and Little Russians under the new circumstances were losing relevance, and the common features assumed renewed importance in the alien environment. See P. Bizzilli, “Geopolitical Conditions of the Evolution of Russian Nationality,” *The Journal of Modern History* 1 (1930): 27–36. (Generally, Bizzilli’s theoretical comments on nationalism and nation-formation deserve special attention—his approach in many ways predated nationalism studies of the 1980s and 1990s.)
- 34 In the Volga region, not a single town was left by the 19th century where Muslim population would constitute a majority. See A. J. Frank, M. A. Usmanov, *Materials for the Islamic history of Semipalatinsk : two manuscripts by Ahmad-Wal i al-Qaz an i and Qurb an ali Kh alid i*, Introduction (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2001), 2. The authors describe Semipalatinsk as “the only Muslim city in Russia proper.” It would be interesting to see their definition of “Russia proper.”
- 35 On the special positive image of the Finno-Ugric peoples in the Russian discourse, see R. P. Geraci, *Window to the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), esp. chapter 2.
- 36 See, e.g., N. Knight, “On Russian Orientalism. A Response to Adeeb Khalid,” *Kritika, New Series* 1: 4 (2000): 701–715, for this thesis, see 708.

- 37 *Agrarnyi vopros i krest'ianskoe dvizhenie 50–70-kh godov XIX v. Materialy po istorii narodov SSSR*, Issue 6 (Moscow–Leningrad, 1936), 333. “The circumstances have made me into a Russian, and I am proud of this name, without, however, feeling ashamed for being a Chuvash and without forgetting my origins. As a Christian, who loves Russia and believes in her great future, I would wish with all my soul that the Chuvash, my compatriots, were enlightened by the light of the Gospel and would become one with the great Russian people,” wrote Iakovlev of himself. (331–332).
- 38 *Pis'ma N.I. Il'minskogo k ober-prokuroru Sviateishogo sinoda K.P. Pobedonstsevu* (Kazan, 1895), 399.
- 39 See W. Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860–1917* (Toronto: McGill-Queen University Press, 2001), particularly 21–28, 66–68, 83–84; R. P. Geraci, *Window to the East*; A. Miller. “Rossiiskaia imperia, orientalizm i protsessy formirovaniia natsii v Povolzh'e,” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2003). See also: *Pis'ma N.I. Il'minskogo...*, 2, 3, 53, 63, 64, 74.
- 40 The realization of the spread of Islam as a threat was also connected with external circumstances, namely with the sympathy the Russian Muslims demonstrated toward the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War. Later, with the emergence of Pan-islamism, and, especially, Pan-turkism, the connection of the empire's internal policies with the external situation became especially relevant.
- 41 See W. Dowler, *Classroom and Empire*; R. P. Geraci, *Window to the East*.
- 42 See P. Holquist, “To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate. Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia” in R. G. Suny, T. Martin, *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111–144, particularly 117 (on Caucasus) and 122 (on Central Asia).
- 43 See T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

The Russians and the Turks: Imperialism and Nationalism in the Era of Empires

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Comparing Russia and Turkey might appear to be a far-fetched enterprise. The differences are obvious, even too obvious to be dwelt upon at any length. There is a problem as to definition—what was nationalism about—and there is a difficulty as regards effect and timing. Russian nationalism (as distinct from empire-loyalism) is a nineteenth-century creation and Turkish nationalism came into being even later. Russian nationalists did not have to create a state until very, very late in the day—the end of the twentieth century, where Lenin's body still lies in Red Square next to the symbols of imperial Russia. Turkic nationalists came into their own during the War of Independence after 1918, when, in response to Greek and other invasions, a new Turkish State was created. Its makers maybe had a long ancestry in terms of Muslims versus Christians, but their ancestry in terms of Turkish nationalism was quite short, not much longer than a single generation. In fact you can more or less date Turkish nationalism back to a conference in Paris in 1902, when various associations, broadly known as “Young Turks,” established a single “Union and Progress” association (which, like the almost contemporaneous Russian social-democratic congress, famously split).

This essay will suggest that, despite these obvious differences, when it comes to imperialism and nationalism, there are never the less tantalizing comparisons throughout. A symbol: in both, the word ‘empire’ and ‘nationalism’ had to be adapted from imports (for instance, in Turkish, *imparatorluk*). Each country had a rather similar tangential relationship with the West, and each had had its period of glory, its empire. Each had its relationship with Christianity, and with Islam. Each had a native people, who gave their name to the empire, but sometimes could feel, none the less, that it was the victim of that empire. “*Rus* was the victim of the Russian empire,” runs a well-established line.¹ Adapt that to “Turkey was the victim of the Ottomans” and you might even find that one or other of the nationalists said it. It will be this paper's argument that in certain aspects the similarities outweigh the differences. Hosking says that “a fractured and under-developed nationhood has been (the Russians’) principal historical burden.”² This could easily be asserted to the Turks.

There is, between the two, an important counterpoint, in that much of the modern history of both countries consists of a response to some action by the other. A most significant date was October 1552 when Ivan the Terrible took Kazan from the Tatars, cousins of the Anatolian Turks.³ From then on, Russia was in a slow ascendant, which, in the reign of Catherine the Great, became a rapid one. The famous naval battle of Cesme, in 1782, saw the Ottoman fleet crushed by a Russian fleet, which had entered the Mediterranean from the west, with British connivance. Thereafter, Russia became the great enemy for the Ottoman Turks, with only brief interruptions. In the eighteenth century the long war of Ottoman succession began, with long periods of peace, which lasted until 1918 when the empire finally broke up. Russians and Turks counted almost as hereditary enemies. Two nationalisms—or perhaps, more accurately, ideologies of empire—collided, and shaped the other. Initially, there was more in common than might be supposed. In the first place, there is the semi-Asiatic, Turkish character of some of Russian history, particularly in the period of the Tatars invasion—a contentious subject. Much of the Old Russian nobility, for instance, was of Tatar origin—Yusupov from Yusuf, Saburov from *sabir*, ‘patient’,⁴ even Godunov, of which the origin may be obscene.⁵ The great Prince Igor himself was three-quarters Polovtsian (Kipchak) and spoke a Turkic mother tongue.⁶ Russian nationalists of anti-western stamp, particularly desperate xenophobic *evraziitsy* of course played up this element of their past: why was Russia the only Slav country that had “succeeded”? Yet even N.M. Karamzin said, “Moscow owes its greatness to the khans” and Vernadsky noted that Muscovy’s state centralization came through “Mongol principles of administration”.⁸ There is a counterpart in Turkish historiography.

What did the Ottomans owe to Byzantium? Russia obviously owed a great deal, though this may be contested because of the echoes of Pan-Slavism which to some Russians was nonsense upon stilts, in Bentham’s useful phrase. There was an important controversy, in the first third of the twentieth century, as to the nature of the Ottoman Empire. There were, in history, several Turkish or Turkic (note on the difference) Empires, the celebrated “empires of the steppe” (Rene Grousset) or *l’empire du levant*.⁹ None lasted for more than three or four generations. The standard pattern was for Turkic nomads, good cruel horsemen, to arrive and take over; then they would themselves inter-marry and succumb to civil war. Both in India and Iran, nationalists, looking for something to blame, regarded the Turks as wreckers of what had been, potentially, civilizations with at least the beginnings of western-European promise.¹⁰ But the Ottoman Empire was different: it lasted for about seven centuries or perhaps even longer, if you count the Seljuks, who took most of Anatolia in the twelfth century, as proto-Ottoman.¹¹ Why?

In the days when historians wrote on robustly racial lines, the argu-

ment advanced was that the Ottoman Empire had a very substantial European component. The Turks were indeed nomadic—their badge was the horsetail (*tuğ*) and the sky (*gök*) part of their mythology—and if they conquered a place, they had to make use of the sedentary locals' more developed ways. So they did with Byzantium. A Greek historian of distinction, Dimitri Kitzikis, establishes this: a long, long list of collaborators, including the Orthodox patriarchs, who remained after 1453 among the privileged men in the empire.¹² Writers of books on the rise of the Ottoman Empire have to start with the siege of Constantinople, and they make much of the final services held in Justinian's Hagia Sophia. Indeed the fall of Constantinople, the eternal center of the Christian world, where it used to be said that only the angels in the sky knew when the city of cities would come to its end, was the tragic turning point. It echoed in Moscow, which adopted the doctrine of "The Third Rome," the new and the last stronghold of the only true faith. This messianic Russian idea was formally abandoned in the middle of the seventeenth century (and finally by Peter the Great who accepted the Roman pagan title of Emperor) and yet was later continuously reflected in different forms of Russian nationalism. Orthodoxy of course remained an extremely important feature of Russian national identity. But, for the Orthodox in Constantinople, the arrival of the Ottomans was not the ultimate end. Mehmet the Conqueror who felt attached to his Serbian stepmother displayed a significant degree of tolerance. Under the first sultans in Constantinople, the Orthodox Church preserved vast lands, and the Patriarch had the same badge of rank as the Grand Vizier, three horse-tails (the Sultan had four, and, later, six). Historians noted the importance, which later of course declined, of the Byzantine element in the first century and more of Ottoman imperial history, or even for the earlier period, when the first Osman and his descendants built up their small emirate on the borders of Bithynia in the fourteenth century.¹³

What Russia owed to Byzantium is also a good question, developed by sophisticated historians. Meyendorff asserts that "Byzantine medieval civilization was part of the very texture of Russian life," and even claims that the Byzantine influence made Moscow, rather than Vilna or Tver, the center of a new Russia, emerging from under the Mongol yoke.¹⁴ That does make for curious parallels between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, in particular as to the nature of feudalism in each. The initial argument as to the Byzantine inheritance of the Turks was no doubt racially-inspired, but sophisticated historians were involved in the debates that emerged—Paul Wittek, Mehmed Fuat Koprulu and, latterly, Dimitri Kitzikis. The very word *efendi* came from a title the Patriarch was given, *authentēs*, meaning "sovereign."¹⁵ Even the fiscal system was similar, and from the start, the Ottomans showed a concern for non-religious law, *kanun* in Turkish, to distinguish it from the Islamic *şeria*, though the separation may originally be Mongol. The Byzantine *pronoia* linked cavalry with land holding, as did the Ottoman *timar* and the standard

land-measurement was exactly the same, *donum* and *stremma* (roughly 1,000 square meters). The problem was that the *timar* represented only a temporary grant: over time, it did become hereditary, but heritable property was insecure, in Turkey as, to some extent, in Russia under the *pomestie* system. It would in fact be interesting to explore the effects in both empires of the basic instability of property in land—an instability that of course set strict limits to the development of capitalism.¹⁶ It was mainly left to minorities and foreigners. One final point of comparison: Turks learned from Russians, because a considerable part of the population of western Anatolia arrived, at varying stages in the later nineteenth century, as refugees.¹⁷ In republican Turkey, they or their children made up half of the urban population. Vast numbers of them came from Russia—the Crimea or the Caucasus, as it fell under Russian rule.¹⁸ The Crimean Tatars especially had had a relatively strong state tradition¹⁹ and they learned from Russia to such an extent that their role in the Turkish higher education system was remarkable. In fact Crimean Tatars were the spearhead of “modernization” for the Muslims of Russia in general in the late nineteenth century.²⁰ The influence of Russia upon Turkey through the tsarist education system deserves some stress. Intelligent Ottomans knew that they had something to learn from Russia, however much they also feared her. So a comparison of Russian and Turkish imperialism and nationalism in the modern era is not so hopeless a task as it may first appear to be.

Nationalism of the nineteenth century came to both empires as an alien force. Initially a western European phenomenon, it originated under very different economic, social and political circumstances and generally in both places played a destructive role even when, like the Russian social right-wing nationalism, it emerged from the most “good-intentioned convictions” and formally supported the regime. For these empires nationalism became a sign of crisis and decline. Both empires were ruled by autocratic governments and, while the regimes were firmly controlling their subjects, national sentiments of any kind were not allowed. As the regimes weakened the genies of different nationalisms, both big and small, came out of the bottles. In that sense, the Poles created Russian nationalism and the Greeks (or even Armenians) Turkish.

Originally both the Russian and the Turkish States had, of course, nothing to do with the nationalisms of their major ethnic groups. “One of the decisive facts of Russian history,” as Hans Rogger in his early well-known paper pointed out, was that “the work of national territorial consolidation was completed before nationalism became a major fact of Russian life, and that this consolidation brought with it no extension of political rights, no interpenetration of state and society, no lasting accommodation between them.”²¹ The Russian monarchs derived their legitimacy from above, as God anointed, not from below, and by no means as representatives of the Russian *narod*.

In the ancient land now called Turkey, before the end of the eleventh century, there were basically no Turks (although a certain Turkic penetration had perhaps already begun) they came essentially as conquerors. Gradually, the Ottomans, originally one of the Turkish *beylikates* or emirates (principalities) in Anatolia, even less powerful and smaller than the others, transformed the *beylikate* into their great empire. Behind the conquest was the idea of *jihad*. The dynamic force that again and again led the Ottomans to dominate the others was the Islamic idea of *ghaza*²² which envisaged war against the *darü'l-harb* (abode of war) and transformed these territories into *darü'l-islam* (abode of Islam). *Ghazis* were sacred warriors who conquered and settled in *darü'l-harb* territories. So the Turks came to Anatolia as *ghazi* warriors. Since the Ottoman Empire was founded on the *ghaza* tradition as a *ghazi* state, it could easily expand at the expense of *darü'l-harb* into Byzantine territories. In addition, the Ottomans, as a *ghazi* state on the borders of *darü'l-harb* often formed an alliance with the other *beylikates*. The religious, not the ethnic factor, played a decisive role.

Ethnically and religiously the Ottoman Empire soon became extremely diverse. Loyalty of the subjects was focused on the dynasty and the Sultan who was proclaimed the shadow of God on the earth. Above all the Sultan was Muslim and represented the Muslim domination over other subjects. But since too many subjects were not Muslim a certain *modus vivendi* had to be established. As a result, the Sultan introduced the *millet* system—his subjects formed, according to their religions, Muslim, Christian and Jewish *millets*. Every *millet* had its own religious leader and each community had its own regulations. Thus religious tolerance was displayed. The Muslim element was simply described as Muslim and in some ways came off less well than Christians or Jews. The Muslims had to serve in the army whereas the Christians simply paid an extra tax. As time went by the inhabitants of Anatolia became much less privileged than those of Constantinople and the Turks hardly had any advantages—they represented a forgotten and backward ethnic element. In fact, the name “Turkey” was not used, except by foreigners, adopting the Italian *Turquia* (medieval Italians may even have misunderstood, that the Turks were only one tribe among others, but the misunderstanding may go back as far as ancient China). With the protection of the *millet* system, and astute bribery, some of the Greeks of Constantinople became very rich, rich enough to buy the tax-rights of the Rumanian lands (and with them, for a year, the title, “prince”; four generations on, they were often Rumanian nationalists). In 1839, and even more so in 1856, imperial decrees made all subjects equal, regardless of religion, and also to some extent secularized the *millets*. The Christians, with their western connections, thrived, and there was even Greek emigration from the drought-ridden mainland to central Anatolia, where a town such as Sinasos (today’s Mustafapasha) became highly prosperous, as its surviving buildings show.

From the time of Peter the Great until the very end, the Russian Empire, despite its name, had a pre-national, *soslovnyi* character. Introducing his westernizing reforms and copying western absolutism Peter the Great treated even the most sacred true-Russian traditions with a large portion of cynicism. Even the administration of the Orthodox Church was transformed according to the Protestant models; the Russian Tsar like the English king became "*khranitel dogmatov*," "the keeper of the dogmas", i.e. "Defender of the Faith."²³ The Romanov's dynasty was ethnically largely German, the nobility included not only Orthodox brothers of the Russians, for instance Georgians, but also Catholic Poles, Lutheran Germans and even Muslim Tatars from Volga and Crimea.²⁴ If, in the nineteenth century, you walked along Nevskii prospect you would have found not only Russian but also German, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, Polish and Armenian churches. The fact that the "Russian" peasantry belonged, literally in times of serfdom, to the Poles or the Germans for a long period simply did not matter.

For the first time the tsarist state seriously considered the Russian people after the French revolution and the Decemberists revolt. These troubles demonstrated that perhaps in the future the *narod* would play a political role and the masses would be told what to do. The state formulated a national doctrine as the vague formula "Orthodoxy–Autocracy–Nationality" (*Pravoslavie–Samoderzhavie–Narodnost*) in response to "liberté, égalité, fraternité" of the French Revolution. It had a certain anti-Western sentiment—Mikhail Pogodin, one of the main interpreters of the theory of official nationality, explained that Russia, as the heir to Byzantium, and the West, as the heir to the Roman Empire, represented two basically different civilizations.²⁵ *Narodnost* was the most enigmatic element of the "official formula." It did not directly signify national identity but reflected the feeling of affiliation of the people to Orthodoxy and the Tsar.²⁶ Andrzej Walicki pointed out that *narodnost* rather designated "the common people" similar by emotional complexion with the German *Volkstum*.²⁷ According to the official ideologues, the specific qualities of the Russian people—submissiveness, patience, and the inclination voluntarily to give power to the beloved Tsar—made autocracy a possible and necessary condition for the existence of Russia. Regardless of that, they displayed a surprising disdain and haughty skepticism towards the Russian people. The author of the formula, Count Sergei Uvarov, at the post of Minister of Education, insisted on the necessity of maintaining serfdom and the impermissibility of the education of the lower classes.²⁸ "The Russian people are wonderful, but still only potentially. In reality it is base, horrible, like cattle," admitted another official ideologue, S. P. Shevyrev. Pogodin suggested that "Russian peasants will not become decent people until they are forced," and that "the Russian person is in need of rational motivation and supervision from outside."²⁹ The central idea of the theory of official nationality was the necessity of leadership by an enlightened government and bureaucracy over an igno-

rant and savage people. In the Ottoman Empire, government was a “miserie” as with the Divine Right of Kings. The servants of the state deliberately kept it so, with an exceedingly difficult official script. One reason for the failure of the idea of an Ottoman university in 1870 was that lectures—wisdom—would have to be opened to ordinary people.³⁰ Similarly, printing, first introduced early in the eighteenth century by a converted Hungarian, was stopped when the clergy protested—perhaps simply against the growth of profane knowledge, perhaps to prevent the dissemination of possibly dissident Christian writings, though in all probability because it would put calligraphers out of lucrative business, regardless of race or creed.

With this sort of approach it is important to consider the real status of the Russians and the Turks in the empires which bore their names but where, apparently, the supposedly “dominating” ethnic majorities did not only dominate but quite the opposite, were discriminated against, particularly the Turks and, to a lesser extent, the Russians. In the Ottoman Empire the very name ‘Turk’ was even rather insulting and was used to denote backwoodsmen, bumpkins, illiterate peasants in Anatolia—‘etraki-bi-idrak’ in an Ottoman (Arabic) play on words ‘the stupid Turk’.³¹ Such was an expression used in court circles (the *Enderun-i Hümayün*, itself consisting often enough of Christians or converts, who had made up “the ruling institution” of the Ottoman Empire almost as soon as the Ottomans invaded the Balkans—incidentally, at Byzantine instigation and with Genoese assistance—in the later fourteenth century).³² A Turkish sarcastic saying ran:

Şalvarı şaltak Osmanlı
Eğeri kaltak Osmanlı
Ekende yok biçende yok
Yemede ortak Osmanlı³³

(The strange Ottomans, who did not look like the Anatolian peasant Turks, never helped to work, seeding or collecting harvest, yet when it comes to eating and spending, they were always with us.)

This is a good illustration of the above statements. It is striking, how after the Empire Atatürk creating the nation tried to turn the connotation of ‘Turk’ upside down. “Happy is the man who can say I am a Turk”—stated the leader of the new nation. This slogan is still widely used to convince everyone, particularly in the eastern part of the country.

Until the end of the Ottoman Empire, the ‘Turks’ signified peasants and nomads in Anatolia or in the Balkans, where they had been compulsorily deported as a part of the Ottoman settlement policy, *surgun*, or they were used as soldiers in military campaigns.³⁴ Selahaddin Eyuboglu says, “we, the conquerors, were conquered.” This most oppressed ethnic group in the Empire was the last one, which discovered its national affiliation.³⁵

With the Russians it was different; to call anyone 'Russian' was never insulting in the Russian Empire, but this was due to the status of the Russian elite, nobility and later the emerging middle class but not to the position of the peasantry, the vast majority of ethnic Russians. To compare with non-Russians, the Russian peasantry normally did not enjoy any privileges but instead was deprived. The imperial government intentionally used a special tax system to keep the Russians in Russia proper materially poorer than non-Russians at the outskirts of the empire. The latter always paid smaller taxes and enjoyed various exemptions.³⁶ The logic behind it was that from the government's point of view non-Russians could cause troubles more easily than the Russians and St. Petersburg's priorities were stability and security of the empire, not ethnic Russians' interests. The result was a well-known phenomenon "*oskudenie tsentra*," "impoverishment of the core," one of the major themes of public debates in late imperial Russia. The same pattern, discrimination of the Russian peasants, was applied sometimes in ethnically mixed areas. For example, in the eighteenth century many Russian peasants in the Volga region were the serfs of Tatar nobles (oddly enough, no Russian noble could own Muslim peasants as serfs), a notoriously harsh burden in itself, and apart from that the Russians were subjects to military service; while at the same time Tatar peasants were subordinated directly to the state, which was a much better status, and were free from military conscription.³⁷ Serfdom, particularly oppressive in Russia proper, was abolished only in 1861, and *vykupnye platezhi*, payments for the acquired lands that the peasants had to make, were the highest for the Russians,³⁸ while privileged hinterlands enjoyed freedoms granted them by the Russian emperor from the moment of their unification with the empire. After 1905, when Russian nationalists obtained the right to speak in the Duma, they strongly criticized this aspect of the imperial policy. Getting fired up at the high rostrum of Duma in Tavrida Palace, the Rightists went as far as to accuse emperors of being seemingly anti-Russian. The leader of the Union of the Russian People (SRN) N.E. Markov speaking on the Finnish question pointed out that when the Russian Tsar Alexander I granted Finland a constitution, "and quite liberal, at the same time his very native Russian subjects were still slaves, his Russian people were sold in bazaars..."³⁹ The orator of the All-Russian National Union (VNS) I.P. Sozonovich asserted that "Alexander I looked upon Russia through Polish eyes" and adopted a "Russia for Poland" ideology.⁴⁰ The last statement came as an emotional exaggeration, and yet it has been clearly demonstrated that "the quality of life of the Russians was one of the lowest in the empire."⁴¹ The percentage of those literates was higher among Poles, Jews, Finns, Baltic peoples, and even among Volga and Crimean Tatars than among the Russians. Non-Russians were better represented among qualified educated professionals; at the beginning of the twentieth century life expectancy of the Russians, an important indication of living standard,

was lower than of Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Jews, Tatars, Bashkirs.⁴² Furthermore, politically the necessity to maintain the empire undoubtedly hampered the liberalization of the Great Russian core and generally the formation of the Russian nation.⁴³

Under those circumstances the Russians did not have many reasons to feel racially or culturally superior over non-Russian subjects of the Tsar. In European Russia non-Russians were not merely white-skinned but often richer, more cultured and politically more advanced. In the East the ethnically diverse Russian imperial elite displayed a certain cultural arrogance and an idea of a civilizing mission, and yet observers noted that Russian peasants and soldiers hardly displayed any sign of a superiority complex over the natives.⁴⁴ Obviously regarding the position of the major nationality and its relations with the “subordinated” nations the Russian, like the Ottoman, Empires were very different from the European colonial states. The Ottoman Empire, even formally, had no “master-race” or *Staatsvolk*.

Thus the vast majority of Russians had to carry a heavy burden to maintain their empire without receiving anything back, at least those concerned with their daily needs and not with geopolitical strategies. Nicholas II, sentimental in the Slavophiles’ way towards the Russian *narod*, once demonstrated his understanding of the backbreaking price that his favorite subjects had to pay for the imperial grandeur. When his favorite general A.N. Kuropatkin explained to the monarch the difficulties of a possible military campaign in Afghanistan, Nicholas II agreed, saying, “this means that the same Russian *muzhik* will have to pay everything.”⁴⁵ The priority, however, again remained imperial interests.

On the contrary, the Russian, *rossiiskaia* rather than *russkaia*, elite easily identified with the imperial state. The empire was built on the alliance of the imperial government and the elite, Russian and non-Russian. As long as the local upper class, from Baltic Germans to Armenians and Tatars, had the same social status as the Russian nobility and possessed lands it freely joined the imperial elite, enjoyed the same privileges and exerted influence on St. Petersburg’s policy.⁴⁶ Before “the nationalization” of the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century to join the elite was often even easier for non-Russians.⁴⁷ However, in this cosmopolitan world the Russian element was not forgotten. The sense of essential continuity between Muscovite Rus and the Russian Empire was preserved in a variety of rituals, symbols and myths, in religion and language⁴⁸ often by the same aristocratic clans who stood around Rurikids and then Romanovs. “Aristocratic families—Dominic Lieven said—found it easy to identify with a dynastic state whose history was their own.”⁴⁹ In comparison, in the Ottoman Empire the proper Turkish element among the elite barely played any role—it hardly existed at all. The leaders of the founding Turkish flocks were brutally eliminated with the rise of *devshirme* in the palace. The early Sultans recruited officials who had no loyalty beyond that to the

sovereign. Christian boys were taken from their families and received intensive training for “the governing services.” They accounted for nearly all the high dignitaries—Grand Vizier etc. Pashas then were drawn from anywhere and everywhere, especially the Levantines.

The answer to the question of why the Russian Empire was rising while the Ottomans declined at least in part lies in the quality of leadership provided by the imperial elite. As Geoffrey Hosking wrote, “there are no doubts that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Russian aristocracy was culturally the richest and the most cosmopolitan class in Europe.”⁵⁰ Golitsyns and Bagratians, Benckendorffs and Sumarokov-Elstons, Bobrinskys and Kochubeis (from Turkic Küçük-bey) celebrated and shared the glory in the enormous success of the Russian Empire. Even in the period of the revolutionary crises when, as columnist M.O. Men’shikov wrote, the representatives of the state power became somewhat smaller in scale compared with happier times,⁵¹ the Russian elite found the strength to produce a figure of the caliber of Petr Stolypin who embodied the best of the Russian nobility. Among the relatives of Stolypin’s family known since the sixteenth century were, to name a few, general Alexander Suvorov, the poet Mikhail Lermontov, the diplomat Alexander Gorchakov. Stolypins had some right to believe that the history of the Russian Empire was their own from the very beginning until the very end, and this was a destiny to be proud of. In the Ottoman Empire in the last centuries of its existence the quality of leadership became notoriously inadequate and the cultural influence of the elite was impossible to compare with their Russian peers. The Ottoman hereditary aristocracy simply never existed. There were of course grand families, such as the Karaosmanogulları who descended from emirs allied with the early Ottomans, but these were few, and the “ruling institution” of the empire came from anywhere and everywhere—the chief motivation being that they would be eternally dependent upon the Sultan. First there were the *devshirmes*. Christian boys conscripted into imperial service. With the abolition of *janissaries* and *devshirme*, local nobles known as *ayans*, who possessed lands and armed men in various parts of the empire came as a substitute. During the reign of Mahmud II, the *ayans* and the Palace even signed a document known as *sened-i ittifak* in which both sides promised to respect each other. Yet, gradually the new elite was again eliminated by the Palace. In the Palace itself the harem, with all those intrigues and routine murders of the possible successors of the Sultan, had a terrible, devastating effect.

“They were terribly far distant from the *narod*,” Lenin, himself staying in Zurich, wrote about the Decembrists. It once again reflected the *idée fixe* of the Russian intelligentsia—to bridge an enormous gap between the lower classes and the educated society. This was not of course a mere fantasy; neither the barrier between the elite and the masses was an exclusively Russian problem. In England in the nineteenth century, the question of

horizontally divided “two nations” caused an extensive public debate. Even in France, after all those social disturbances, the cultural gap was large.⁵² Yet in the Russian Empire it was far greater. Although the differences between “the state” and “the land” existed before, it was Peter the Great who within the astonishingly brief historical period created the elite which thought, behaved and even looked very differently from the *narod*.⁵³ In a sense, because the Russian elite had more in common with the French or German upper class than with their own *narod*, the gap that divided the Russians took an ethnic character. Could Orthodoxy (like Catholicism) build this missing bridge between the different strata? It could most likely play a certain role but only with difficulty. The Orthodox culture of the upper and lower classes became quite different. As N.A. Berdiaev pointed out, Russians “lived on different floors and even in different centuries... Between the upper and the ground floors of the Russian culture there was almost nothing in common, a total split.” This division signified a major obstacle for a formation of the Russian nation. However this cause was not hopeless as it was in the Ottoman Empire where the elite was not only entirely isolated from the “Turks” but literally spoke a different language.

An appeal to the peasantry, as a social class possessing “true Russian-ness,” was an essential feature of Russian nationalism from the writers of the eighteenth century to the Union of the Russian People after 1905.⁵⁴ Particularly the Russian *intelligentsia* of the nineteenth century in her search of “Russian-ness” under the influence of European Enlightenment and Romanticism turned to the peasantry and propagated various sorts of populism. This tendency even reached the occupant of the tsarist throne when Nicholas II, the greatest admirer of the Russian *narod* and all things “truly Russian,” found Rasputin and thus reestablished, as he believed, the missing link between the Tsar and the *narod* overcoming the alien bureaucratic barrier.

In fact, true-Russian or not, the peasantry, generally illiterate, in the Russian empire (and in Turkey even more so), still identified itself in pre-national categories and remained a subject of ideological manipulations of Russian, Polish and a small number of Ukrainian nationalists with their projects of ideal fatherlands and nations.⁵⁵ For the millions of the subjects of the Tsar and the Sultan various historical alternatives were opened and they could join, under this or that political and social circumstances, different forming nations.

The major theorists of nationalism emphasized the role of education. “At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor,” said Ernest Gellner.⁵⁶ It is the educational system that largely forms the national identity and it is literacy that makes possible intensive communications, a necessary precondition for nation building. In these matters the Russians of course were far ahead of the Turks. Although ethnic Russians were not among the most literate nationalities within the em-

pire, in late imperial era education was rapidly developing and in 1914 already 54% of the imperial male population could read.⁵⁷ By that time plans were in place to introduce universal compulsory elementary education and only the war postponed the joint commitment of both society and the government to set up education for all.⁵⁸ This would give a powerful tool to the government in consolidating the empire around its Russian ethnic core and would strengthen the emerging Russian nation that could quite possibly include, for instance, future Ukrainians. In 1897 among those who lived on the territory of the future Ukraine and who at that time were indisputably Russian, at least from the governmental point of view, only 19% were literate, i.e. could read Russian.⁵⁹ If in the more advanced western hinterlands, Poland and Finland, the resistance against the consolidation of the empire predictably was serious, then with a small number of the Ukrainian course activists and pre-national consciousness of the local population the chances for the success of the big Russian nation's project in Ukraine were high.⁶⁰ At the same time, particularly since the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian high culture was becoming more national. *Peredvizhniki* in fine arts or *Moguchaya Kuchka* in music are among the numerous examples illustrating this tendency.⁶¹

In the late Ottoman Empire Turkish nationalists faced a troublesome problem in promoting mass literacy. The Ottoman language was a highly stylized mixture of Turkic grammar and Arabic or Persian vocabulary. It was used by barely more than a few thousand people, the Ottoman elite, and was quite inaccessible to ordinary "Turks" who were in these matters a long way behind the non-Muslims. In 1861, non-Muslims had 571 primary and 94 secondary schools, with 140,000 pupils, a bigger number than for the many more numerous Muslims, who, as well, had to spend five-sixths of their schooling time on Arabic and study of the Koran.⁶² Some of the Young Turks simply said the peasantry would never be literate unless the alphabet was changed to Latin. In other words here is a nationalism which cannot read its grandparents tombs or understand the poetry of its ancestors—a terrible burden for any nationalism to carry.

In imperial times Russian nationalism reached its peak in times of P.A. Stolypin when the government tried to bridge the gap with the society and actively cooperated with the All-Russian National Union and the other nationalist groups on the ideological basis of complicated mixture of national liberalism and recognized necessity to maintain autocracy.⁶³ The revolution of 1917 for those nationalists became the national catastrophe, Russian nationalism was defeated by the internationalists who despised even the most innocent notions of Russian nationalism and glorified instead "proletariat that does not have its fatherland." On the contrary, nationalists won in Turkey.

Revolutionaries coming to power sometimes make for radical cultural change and so it was with the Turkish nationalists who took power in

1922–23. They changed the calendar (as did the Bolsheviks, though less drastically) and by 1928, they had altered the Arabic numerals and the alphabet. They also altered the vocabulary itself, a language commission operating in the 1930's (with the curious attendance of Ernst Reuter, the later mayor of West Berlin at the time of the Blockade in 1948–49; he had become, in exile, professor of town planning at the university of Ankara but seems, in his early youth, to have learned Kazakh while a prisoner of war in Russia, and so made himself useful when the language reformers wanted to substitute a Turkic word for an Arabic one).⁶⁴ At much the same time, western classical music was being introduced, or even enforced (the radio played nothing else) with Bartók and Hindemith at the fore. The very constitution had to be translated into modern Turkish at the end of the Second World War, because it had become incomprehensible. This has made for much confusion and controversy, because the entire corpus of Ottoman poetry now escapes nearly all Turks. But it is worth noting that, even in the nineteenth century, a problem was recognized that the mass of people could simply not become literate in the old language, far too contorted and difficult for them. In fact you could not even discuss modernization without relapsing into Arabic—*icma-i-iümmet* for “consensus of the community” or, later, *ruhsat-i seriyye* (“permission of religious law”) for “civil liberty.”⁶⁵ One strand of Turkish nationalism went back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when men who thought of themselves as liberal, empire-loyal and Muslim modernizers ran into this question. All along, at any rate since the empire had lost that element of Greco-Turkish partnership that it had had for the century and more after 1453, there was tension as regards westernization. A school of mathematics had been established, on a French expert's advice, in 1734. The clergy disliked it: it was not for ordinary mortals to out-guess the God of Numbers, theodisy. Guns then became inaccurate. In 1759 an enlightened vizier, understanding that artillerymen needed to know something about ballistics, re-opened the school (*Hendeshane*), but had to do so semi-clandestinely. The same was true later for a school of engineering.⁶⁶

The early Turkish nationalists would not have been recognized as such. They often had a background in the imperial bureau of translators, and wanted to modernize the Ottoman Empire; they had Christian allies with the same ends in view. The aim was a constitution, a parliament, which did indeed exist until Abdülhami abolished it in 1877. In so far as they had a “nationalism” it was Islamic. Some of them were concerned to defend religious rights against the imperial prerogative (*orf*) which, as the *Tanzimat* reforms of 1839 went ahead, appeared to cause injustice: the execution of an Ottoman governor of Damascus who failed, or was wrongly accused of failing, in 1860, to prevent massacres of Maronites by Druses. Under the unreformed *millet* system, such communities lived together though no doubt in conditions resembling apartheid. Reform led to competition, western as-

sociation with Christians, and hence Muslim resentment.⁶⁷ But to proclaim the rights of Islam was one thing, to encounter their consequence, another. The administrator-poet Ziya Pasha wrote of backwardness, as so many Muslims did:

Diyar-ı küfrü gezdim beldeler kaşaneler / Dolaştım mülk-ü İslamı bütün viraneler gördüm (in effect, “Christianity equals palaces and Islam equals ruins”).⁶⁸ What was to be done about this and whose fault was it? Serif Mardin’s “Young Ottomans” (they called themselves ‘new’—*yeni*—rather than ‘young’, but ‘young’ stuck in translation because of analogies with other nations, Mazzini’s Italy especially) at once encountered a problem, that modernizing Islam was exceedingly difficult, because there was no effective central authority that might undertake this. Some stumbled towards greater emphasis on the native, i.e. properly Turkish, element. İbrahim Şinasi Efendi (born 1826) worked towards intelligible prose and a simplified alphabet and Namık Kemal (born 1840 in Tekirdağ, on the Marmara coast) has a claim to be the first writer using Turkish rather than Arabo-Persian. The idea, throughout, was to make their prose accessible to ordinary people—we do not have to be idealistic about this, and intellectuals everywhere no doubt marveled at the money to be made by penny-a-line journalism in the western world, and especially in England, where no monkish Academy had ever been allowed to over-complicate the written language with esoteric vocabulary and cumbersome subjunctives.

But the Young Ottomans, in the next generation, became Young Turks. Here, too, was a foreign import, much like the word ‘Turkey’, though the article was genuine enough. In fact even the foundation-date was symbolic in a European sense. In 1889, the centennial of the French Revolution, the Second International was founded—delegates profited from cheap railway fares offered in Paris⁶⁹: the Italian socialist party was similarly founded in 1892, courtesy of cheap fares to Genoa for the Columbus celebrations. Ali Rıza Bey then also, in Paris, established his association—“Committee for Union and Progress”, but called *Jeunes Turcs* by everyone else (including their own people—in Turkish they are known as *jöntürkler* as well). Ali Rıza, a follower of Auguste Comte and hence also a strict scientific secularist, was prepared to fight with the Islamists, and he was also ready to promote Turkish-ness, despite the associations of rusticality etc. In time, ambitious women were involved, notably the novelist Halide Edip (Adıvar).⁷⁰ There was a three-cornered contest in the late Ottoman Empire, between nationalists advancing the Turkish cause as such, westernizers, and religious leaders, though there were crosscurrents, as there continued to be in the history of the later Republic. Abdülhami had tried to use religion in much the same way as the Tsars used Russian populism (or as the Prince Regent in Bavaria in the same period wore *Lederhosen*).⁷¹ Oppression had reigned at home, and problems grew, both with Armenian and Albanian nationalism. In 1908, officers of Union and Progress seized power, faced a

Muslim rebellion the following year, with another version of it in 1912, and asserted a semi-dictatorship, confining the Sultans to a largely ceremonial role. They then embarked on reforms that anticipated the later Atatürk ones, at least on a small scale—reduction of polygamy, a Turkish version of the Koran, admission of women into schools, and ideas of language reform. The chief ideologist of Turkish nationalism was Ziya Gökalp (1875–1924), himself of Kurdish origin, and a considerable student of the then new sociology. Durkheim, who gave a sociological underpinning to collectivism, was influential among the Istanbul intellectuals, and such collectivism served to reinforce nationalism. The *Türkçüler* of the immediate pre-war years set up “Turkish Hearths” (*ocak*, a rendering of the French *foyer* of which ‘hearth’ is a clumsy but inevitable equivalent). These pullulated in the 1920’s, though after 1930–31, in one of those many curious instances of Turkish republicans’ copying from Soviet practice, they then became “People’s Houses,” spreading adult secular education in the style of the Soviet *narodny dom*.⁷² By 1914, there were also calls for a latinization of the alphabet.

How far Islam was involved in Turkish nationalism is a controversial matter, accounting for the popularity of the subject in print. This is really a reflection of the divisions in the Turkey of recent times—a certain strand of nationalism claims the soul (*can*) is Islam and the blood (*kan*) Turkish; the older generation of nationalists tended to be atheist progressives. There is another side, the relationship of Turkish nationalism with the Christian minorities. To start with, there was alliance. After all, the constitution for the empire, which the Young Turks wanted, was thought to be beneficial for all of its subjects. In fact the Greeks of Istanbul and Anatolia generally did not make trouble, and a Greek even served as minister of education in 1911. However, the Christian states showed another example. Millions of Muslims had had to flee from Russian rule in the Caucasus or the Crimea.⁷³ The Balkan states, Greece in the lead, established nations on the basis of kaleidoscopic miniature Ottoman Empires—expelling Muslims in hundreds of thousands, and knocking down mosques. Did this lead some Turkish nationalists—the medical Doctor Nazım, prominent in the inner circles of Union and Progress—to assume that ethnic homogeneity was an inevitable concomitant of progress: a contentious and under-examined subject? In this, as in other matters, these nationalists followed precepts, and even provocations, from outside.⁷⁴ By 1923, after years of war, and the death of one-quarter of the Anatolian population, such ethnic homogeneity had been in the main achieved.

Various other points of comparison might be raised. Pan-Slavism came no doubt from some sort of German example—the first Pan-Slav congress in Prague, notoriously, used German and anyway had to contend with Slavs’ religious and territorial rivalries. There was a Pan-Turanian equivalent, raised particularly by the refugees from Russia; Crimean Tatars especially had expected to lead a general movement of Tatars⁷⁵ and they also took a

lead with attempts to modernize Islamic schools, as distinct from doing away with them altogether. Oddly enough, some of the inspiration, here, came from Hungarians, who from the 1820's⁷⁶ had been active in Central Asia, searching for their national roots. Pan-Turanianism was bound to emerge, once the idea of a Turkish race as basis for the new ideology came up. Attempts were made at the end of the First World War to bring it to fruition, but a combination of religious conservatism (against Hanefi Turks, later than Shafi Central Asians) and Bolshevik adroitness caused these to fail. In any case, for almost a generation, Atatürk's agreement with the Bolsheviks caused Turkey to abandon such ambitions.

It will be seen that, however forbidding the initial juxtaposition, there is sufficient common ground for comparison of Russian and Turkish nationalism to make sense. Both grew out of reaction to the nationalism of minorities. Both emanated from a supposedly "imperial" people, which turned out to be less well off than the supposedly colonized and subjected peoples. Both were in a sense a reaction to the West, and both, the Russians so far more successfully, had a cultural content of much significance. Both might also be captured by historical mythology. Allied to sociology, as it was understood in the early twentieth century (the Chair of Eugenics at University College, London was re-named Chair of Sociology in 1922, when the next incumbent was to be appointed), it was vulnerable to doctrines of ethnic homogeneity and "integral nationalism". The Russian variant only truly appeared in 1991, with the loss of the Soviet alternative. In that sense, Russian nationalism was interrupted by Communism after the First World War, whereas it was then that the Turkish variant came into its own. The recovery of modern Turkey, for all of her problems far, far ahead of where she stood in 1923, has been a remarkable story: the paradox being that she has proved to be the most successful of the Ottoman successor-states. Will the same be said for Russia?

NOTES

1 G. Hosking, Russia. *People and Empire 1552–1917* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), xix.

2 Ibid., xx.

3 The authors ask for indulgence if, in the text, they simplify nomenclature at the expense of strict accuracy. They are aware that there are considerable problems as to the relationship of Mongols, Tatars, Turks, and 'Turks' themselves divide to mention only two between Kipchak and Oğuz, who went south-west—the Gagauz in today's Moldavia were originally Karaoğuz from 'kara', meaning 'black' and hence perhaps 'north', since the Turks like the Chinese used colors to denote points of the compass. There is extensive literature on such subjects, exceedingly problematical because of sources that range from old China to Byzantine Greek and Arabic. L.N. Gumilev, *Tysiachiletie vokrug Kaspiia* (Baku, 1991) and his work

- on the 'ancient Turks'—*Drevnie Turki*—became a famous text for Russians examining their relationship with Central Asia and the Caspian.
- 4 Ch. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); N.A. Baskakov, *Russkie familii turkskogo proiskhozhdeniia*. (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1979); A.N. Kurat, *Pecenek Tarihi* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Basımevi, 1937).
 - 5 N. Baskakov, *op. cit.*, 56–59: 'bugger'.
 - 6 J.-P. Roux, *Histoire des Turcs: deux mille ans du Pacifique à la Méditerranée* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), 182.
 - 7 The most recent article on Russian religious philosophers' criticism of Eurasianists: father G. Mitrofanov, "Teoreticheskii soblazn' ili mirovozzrencheskaia mutatsiia kommunisticheskoi ideologii," *Posev* 6 (2003): 33–36; 7 (2003): 25–30.
 - 8 Cf. J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 261–262.
 - 9 R. Grousset, *L'empire des steppes: Attila, Gengis-khan, Tamerlane* (Paris: Payot, 1952); idem, *L'empire du levant* (Paris: Payot, 1946).
 - 10 J. -P. Roux, *op. cit.*
 - 11 The majority of Turkish historians nowadays clearly separate the Seljukid and the Ottoman periods in Anatolian history. S. Akşin et al., *Türkiye Tarihi*, 3 vols (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1988).
 - 12 See also, S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).
 - 13 D. Kitzikis, *L'empire Ottoman* (1994), of which there is a Turkish translation with the significant subtitle, a Greek-Turkish condominium.
 - 14 J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, 270
 - 15 D. Kitzikis, *op. cit.*, 70
 - 16 R. Pipes, *Property and Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).
 - 17 J. McCarthy, S. Faroqhi et al. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 793 give a figure of 800,000 from Russia.
 - 18 For example, the number of Caucasian Muslims who immigrated from Russia to Turkey reached 400 thousand. *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994) 147.
 - 19 A. Kappeler, *Rossiiia - Mnogonatsional'naia Imperiia. Vozniknovenie, istoriia, raspad* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000).
 - 20 H. Kırımlı, *National Movements and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars, 1905–1916*, (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1996).
 - 21 H. Rogger, "Nationalism and the State: A Russian Dilemma," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (April, 1962): 255
 - 22 N. Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 10.
 - 23 One of Peter's most symbolic acts was making the guns for the new army from the church bells. 200 years later Nicholas II, admirer of "all things Russian," a sort of anti-Peter in this sense, ordered the bells for St. Petersburg Peter and Paul cathedral to be made from the guns, perhaps also seeing a symbolism here. In this cathedral all Russian emperors had been buried. In 1998 the remains of Nicholas II and his family were solemnly delivered from Siberia and buried at the same place of worship. One of the authors of this paper talked to a person who rang the bells at this memorial service, the bells made by Nicholas II, as it amazingly after so many years turned out to be, for his own funeral. When the last, strongest sound went to the sky, the bell-ringer felt, he said, that the circle of history finally came to its end.

- 24 See, A. Kappeler, *op. cit.*
- 25 M. P. Pogodin, *Istoricheskie aforizmy* (Moscow, 1936), 29–30.
- 26 For more on this third element of the official formula, see N. V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1967), 124–167.
- 27 A. Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 36
- 28 S. S. Uvarov, *Desiatiletie ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia. 1833–1843* (St. Petersburg, 1864), 11–12.
- 29 A. Walicki, *op. cit.*, 36.
- 30 S. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 65.
- 31 J.-P. Roux, *op. cit.*, 369.
- 32 S. Mardin, *op. cit.*, 114.
- 33 B. Güvenç, *Türk Kimliği: Türk Kültür Tarihinin Kaynakları* (Istanbul: Remzi Yayınları, 1996), 163.
- 34 H. Inalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 122–29.
- 35 K. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: reconstructing identity, state, faith and community in the late Ottoman state* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 326.
- 36 B. Mironov, *Sotsial'naia istoriia Rossii*, vol. 1, p. 33 (St. Petersburg: "Dmitri Bulanin," 1999).
- 37 A. Kappeler, *Russlands Erste Nationalitäten: das Zarenreich und die Völker der Mittleren Wolga vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 1982).
- 38 B. Mironov, *op. cit.*, 37.
- 39 *Gosudarstvennaia Duma. Tretii sozyv. Stenograficheskie otchëty*. Session 1, Part 3, Meeting 64, cols 370–371.
- 40 *Gosudarstvennaia Duma. Tretii sozyv. Stenograficheskie otchety*. Session 1, Meeting 84, cols 2875–2876.
- 41 B. Mironov, *op. cit.*, 47.
- 42 *Ibid*, 47, 62.
- 43 This is, again, the main theme of Geoffrey Hosking's recent book *Russia: People and Empire*. Curiously the author here went hand in hand with the Slavophiles.
- 44 D. Lieven, "Russian, Imperial and Soviet Identities," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (1998): 262–263.
- 45 B. V. Anan'ich, R. Sh. Ganelin. *Nikolai II. Vospominaniya i dnevniki* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 62.
- 46 A. Kappeler, *op. cit.*
- 47 D. Lieven, *Russia's Rulers under the Old Regime* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1989); J. Le Donne, "Ruling Families in the Russian Political Order 1689–1825," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovétique* XXVIII, 3–4 (1987).
- 48 R. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); M. Cherniavsky, "Russia" in O. Ranum, *National Consciousness: History and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe*, (Baltimore, 1975).
- 49 D. Lieven, *Russian, Imperial and Soviet Identities*, 254.
- 50 *Rodina* 1 (1995): 41.
- 51 M.O. Men'shikov, *Pis'ma k blizhnim* (St. Petersburg, 1907), 135.
- 52 See, E. Weber, *Peasant into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).
- 53 G. Hosking, *op. cit.*, 75–94.
- 54 See, L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995), 259–261. On the Union of the Russian people see, H. Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univer-

- sity of California Press, 1986); Don Rawson, *Russian Rightists and the Revolution of 1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); S. A. Stepanov, *Chernaia Sotnia v Rossii, 1905–1914*, (Moscow, 1992); Iu. I. Kir'ianov, *Pravye partii v Rossii, 1911–1917* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001).
- 55 A. Miller, "Ukrainskii vopros" v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (Vtoraya polovina XIX v.) (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000).
- 56 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Ithaca, 1983), 34.
- 57 B. Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia Rossii*, vol. 2, 383.
- 58 P. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 248. See also, J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- 59 See, H. von Bauer, A. Kappeler, B. Roth, eds., *Die Nationalitäten des Russischen Reiches in der Volkszählung von 1897* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1991).
- 60 A. Miller, *op. cit.*, 235.
- 61 See R. Ridenour, *Nationalism, Modernism and Personal Rivalry in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).
- 62 G. Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor: confession, community, and ethnicity in the nineteenth century* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992), 254; A. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek–Turkish Relations* (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1983), 108.
- 63 See D. A. Kotsiubinskii, *Russkii natsionalizm v nachale XX stoletii* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001).
- 64 H. Widmann, *Exil und Bildungshilfe. Die deutschsprachige akademische Emigration in der Türkei nach 1933* (Bern: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 1973), 161f.
- 65 S. Mardin, *op. cit.*, 81, 284.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 143–144.
- 67 L. T. Fawaz, *An Occasion for War. Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press Berkeley 1994), 78ff.
- 68 S. Mardin, *op. cit.*, 54.
- 69 N. Stone, *Europe Transformed 1878–1919* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 191.
- 70 K. Karpat, *op. cit.*, 18.
- 71 The most recent book on this is S. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).
- 72 K. Karpat, *Turkey's Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 23ff and his remarks upon the effect of Communism in Turkey, chapter 14, 349ff.
- 73 J. McCarthy, *Death and Exile: the Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995).
- 74 J. Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878–1896* (London; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 1993); Y. Halacoğlu, *Ermeni tehciri ve gercekler (1914–1918)* (Ankara: TTK, 2001).
- 75 H. Kirimli, *op. cit.*
- 76 T. Demirkan, *Macar Turancılar* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yay., 2000).

Imperial instead of National History: Positioning Modern German History on the Map of European Empires

PHILIPP THER

The initial inspiration for this article comes from recent models of empire.¹ If one may combine Dominic Lieven's and Alfred Rieber's definitions of empire, it amounts to be "a very great power that has left its mark on the international relations of an era," "a polity that rules over wide territories and many peoples" which has left "a major impact on the history of world civilization,"² and which is not based on a democratic, but on a dynastic or ideological legitimization of power. Although the German Empire established in 1871 fully complies with this definition, the historiography about 19th century continental empires in Europe commonly restricts itself on the Habsburg, the Ottoman and the Russian Empires.³ This article explores whether and where the German Empire could be located on this map of continental European empires.

Postwar historiography in Germany has reached a consensus on this question. It has viewed 19th century German history primarily as the past of a nation state inhabited by an ethnically homogenous German society. The term empire had been discredited by the National Socialists and their megalomaniac attempt to create a racially clean "Tausendjähriges Reich." However, the reduction of German history to a narrative of a homogenous nation state and society also provides an element of continuity between the historiography before 1945 and in the Federal Republic. Even the blossoming of theories and empirical studies of imperialism in the 1960s and 1970s did not fundamentally change the aforementioned consensus, because according to the predominant Marxist viewpoint German imperialism was regarded as the result of a capitalist nation state destroyed by its self-destructive contradictions. German imperialism was portrayed as the externalization of interior problems, but not as a form of being or an essence of a state.⁴ The common view of 19th century German history as a national history has been hardened by its legitimizing function for the merger of the GDR and the Federal Republic in 1990. The unification was portrayed as a better version of the first nation state formation in 1871. According to Chancellor Kohl and the political establishment, the Germans again formed a nation state but this time without "blood and iron."

Through this diachronic comparison and the reference to Bismarck, both Germanies of 1871 and of 1990 have been reified as nation states.

It is the goal of this article to show the potential of re-assessing modern German history under the paradigm of imperial rule and of putting it into the context of the three other continental empires in Europe. It should be mentioned that this is meant to be an additional rather than an alternative approach for the aforementioned interpretation of German history in the late 19th and early 20th century. One can write about many aspects of Germany in this period without putting much emphasis on empire. But associating modern German history with recent studies and models of empire can be beneficial to both sides. Firstly, it provides an opportunity to go beyond the prevalent ethnocentrism of postwar historiography. Using an empire approach can help to Europeanize and even globalize German history. It can help the Federal Republic to understand that Germans used to live with people of different origin, denomination and language in one common state, and thus contribute to the acceptance of minorities and cultural diversity. Moreover, the various non-German populations were not just objects of German rule, but they deeply influenced German history. Secondly, it is hoped that the inclusion of Germany in models of empire can contribute to their development and universality. Germany fills the void between the three continentals Central and East-European and the maritime Western empires. It shared characteristics of both types of empire with a tendency toward the former. The case of Germany shows that the experience of empire is not restricted to the very extreme West and the East of the continent, but a common feature of European history from the Atlantic to the Urals until World War I. This has implications for our understanding of modernity. If indeed Europe was still primarily driven and structured by empires until 1918, it means that the formation of nation states cannot be regarded any more as a key step of modernization.⁵

Although the German Empire was destroyed in two World Wars, there still is a double legacy of empire among the population of contemporary Germany. The first one is provided by the tradition of the "old" Prussia and its successor states, the German Empire established in 1871, the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. The experience of empire for example lives on in widespread highhanded attitudes vis-à-vis the Poles. The second and weaker legacy is that of Austria, which developed its own model of imperial rule. Why is the Austrian also a German experience? Until 1866 parts of Austria were member states of the German Federation, and hence Austria is a part of German history. Moreover, imperial rule in Bohemia was secured to a great degree by Germans who came to define themselves as such in the course of the nineteenth century. Today as a result of World War II the majority of the descendants of the Bohemian Germans live in the Federal Republic of Germany and not in Austria. The continuous tensions between Germany and the Czech Republic because of

the Sudeten German question demonstrate that this Austrian legacy has become a problem of Germany.

Why is empire so absent in postwar German historiography except from studies about imperialism in the 1960s and 70s? Mainstream historians who made their career in these two decades would have had a simple answer to this question. They would most likely point to the fact that Germany had only a very short colonial experience which lasted from 1884 until 1914/15 when the overseas territories were lost.⁶ Hence, the maritime empire had little lasting impact compared to France, the Netherlands or England, which were in possession of overseas colonies for several hundred years. According to this standard interpretation, the economy, the state and the nations and its identity were left mostly unchanged by this brief imperial experience which was seen rather as a foreign adventure or a consequence of interior problems than a substantial ingredient of German history.⁷ Because of the lack of a long-lasting maritime empire there was also no decolonization or immigration from the former colonies. Hence the Germans supposedly missed the (post-)imperial experience of Western Europe. Reduced emphasis on German colonial rule with all its atrocities in public or academic discourses was also indirectly caused by the enormous crimes committed by Germans during World War II. All the evils of imperialism, even the genocidal wars against the African people of the Hereros,⁸ were dwarfed by the Holocaust. Coming to terms with this legacy understandably played a more prominent role in the postwar period, although the cruelties committed in Africa and the forms of racial selection clearly served as a negative "learning process" for the policy against Jews under National Socialism.

Recent postcolonial studies have come to different conclusions about the relevance of empire for German history. They have demonstrated that the culture, society and politics in Germany were deeply influenced by the possession of colonies.⁹ Although the maritime empire was already militarily lost in 1914/15, it remained in the heads of the Germans in the Weimar Republic.¹⁰ The main reason why the overseas colonies played a less prominent role in foreign policy was the fact that the revisionism vis-à-vis Poland gained the upper hand. Yet it will be precisely one of the points of this article to show that the relationship with Poles and Poland was driven by colonial attitudes. Some of the traces of empire can even be found in the material culture of present-day Germany, whether it be greasy "Kameruner" in Berlin bakeries, thousands of street-names or the Moor which serves as a symbol for a famous chocolate brand.¹¹

Although the main impulse for a reassessment of Germany's imperial history has come from postcolonial studies, they are not the same as an empire approach. Postcolonial studies are preoccupied with identities and culture rather than power, and they are more interested in the impact of the periphery or the colonies on the center than in the domination of an

empire by its core. They are strongly influenced by the desire of political correctness while empire approaches shun this category. Yet one should not hyperbolize the differences between postcolonial and empire studies. Both operate in the same area and can yield similar, mutually comprehensible results. In Germany experts on postcolonialism have been frontrunners in overcoming the prevalent internalistic perspective of historiography in the postwar period. The major weakness of postcolonial studies in Germany is that they have been preoccupied with maritime colonies only. This means that Germany's colonial history has been studied from a West European viewpoint; what was overlooked was that Germany had not only a maritime empire like England, the Netherlands or France, but also a continental empire like its counterparts in the East and the South, Russia and Austria.

This can be clearly shown with the case of the Prussian partition of Poland. The rule of Polish territories can be categorized as internal colonialism, especially significant because it preceded external colonialism. Analyzing the Polish component of German history offers additional insights. Firstly it demonstrates that up to 1918, even up to 1945, Poles were not just objects, but subjects of German (and Prussian) history. Secondly, it can help to locate Germany on the map of European empires and to explore possibilities for comparative studies. This effort is, however, hampered by the state of research in Germany.¹² There are very few studies which address the entangled character of modern German and Polish history.

There are several reasons for this poor state of research. The first one is the sub-disciplinary division between so called "general" and Eastern European history. The "Allgemeine Geschichte" should not be mistaken for the *vseobshchaia istoriia* in Russia, because it overwhelmingly concentrated on German history and only exceptionally expanded its focus on Western European history. Poland and even the former German territories in Central Europe were completely left out of the picture and thus became a domain of East Europeanists. The so called "Ostforschung" of the postwar period studied Eastern Europe, but concentrated on the German components of Polish and Czech history. Therefore this academic child of German imperialism produced few critical findings about the German past in the East but rather repeated the myth of the cultural mission and superiority of Germans vis-à-vis the Poles and other Slavic nations.¹³

Another reason for these deficits is the ethnocentrism present in postwar historiography. The writings of the two most prominent historians of the period, Thomas Nipperdey and Hans-Ulrich Wehler can serve as good examples. Nipperdey states in the very beginning of his two-volume history of Germany between 1866 and 1918, that "German history is the history of Germans, of the German people."¹⁴ Many Europeans, especially those ruled, partitioned or occupied by Germans would probably have a different opinion. But it is also doing injustice to the people who lived in the German Empire but can not simply be regarded as Germans such as the Alsatians

in the West, the Danes in the North, and in particular the Poles and other Slavic minorities in the East. Only the German Jews receive their own chapter in Nipperdey's earlier book about the 19th century up to 1866.¹⁵ How can one explain Nipperdey's concentration on a "deutsches Volk?" It would be wrong to suggest that he was an old fashioned nationalist. The problem with Nipperdey's work lies not on the normative, but on a theoretical side. Although he claims to write about the entire German nation, the German speaking Austrians are externalized. Nipperdey refers to Austria in his chapters about the dualism with Prussia, but he rarely goes beyond foreign policy, although Bohemia and the Austrian lands were a part of the German Federation.¹⁶ Hence, Nipperdey's "Volk" is located within the borders of imperial Germany of 1871. This is a-historical for the period up to 1866. Working with an implicit state framework would have compelled Nipperdey to put much more emphasis on the Poles and other Slavophone minorities, but they were obviously not a part of his conception of a "Deutsches Volk."

In spite of many theoretical and political differences, Nipperdey's great competitor Hans-Ulrich Wehler treated the 19th and even the 18th century German history in a similar, but even more restrictive way. In his *German Social History* (*Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*) Wehler concentrated on Prussia and its role within the empire, while Austria and in particular the Poles are even less visible than in Nipperdey's work. Although the inclusion of a large Polish population into Prussia and subsequently into the German Empire was one of the single most important factors changing first Prussian and then German history, the partitions are mentioned only in a handful of sentences in the first volume which covers the period between 1700 and 1815.¹⁷ The picture is very similar in the second volume. All one can find about Poland and the Poles are a few paragraphs. Only in the third volume did Wehler dedicate several pages to Poles in chapters that deal with German policy towards the nationalities and the radicalization of nationalism.¹⁸

The other Slavic minorities like the Sorbs or the Upper Silesians are presented as objects of continuous assimilation. One can conclude that Wehler wrote his history of German society from 1700 until 1918 as if the Germans had always been a homogenous nation within a well-defined territory. The *Sonderweg* approach petrified this vision of German history with its traditional Hegelian state orientation. The strategy of explaining its deviation from a "normal" democratic development was to compare Germany with West European nation states and the United States.¹⁹ This served well to bring Germany in the context with Western Europe, but these implicit or explicit comparisons reinforced the emphasis on the nation state in the 19th century German history. This perspective was burdened with the normative assumption that nation states are more modern than empires, and that multi-ethnicity, identification with subnational or supranational political entities is pre-modern.

Summing up these two master narratives of the postwar period by Nipperdey and Wehler one can state that both suffer from a twofold reduction. Except for the sections on international policy, they put their narrative in a territorial framework provided by the empire of 1871 and then they direct their focus on the ethnic Germans within its borders, as if this empire had always been a homogenous nation state. Nipperdey explicitly endorses this ethnocentrism in his opening statement, Wehler implicitly accepts it in his understanding of the term society.²⁰ This double reduction of German history may have worked well as a strategy to construct a narrative, but it has led to marginalizing the imperial elements of German history in the “long” 19th century. Although Nipperdey and Wehler took a critical stance towards the German past and in particular towards the state created in 1871, they perpetuated the myth that a homogenous nation state had been already formed by that time.

To be fair about postwar historiography in the Federal Republic it should be mentioned that another major historian, Dieter Langewiesche, has stressed the importance of the vision of an empire in the German national movement. In a recent book he showed that especially in the period up to 1848 a “Reichsnationalismus,” a nationalism oriented towards a federal empire was dominant.²¹ In general the word “empire” was very common in public and political discourses, and was finally incorporated into the very name of the state founded in 1871. Quite often the German Empire was simply called *the Empire/das Reich*. There was a *Reichsgründung*, a *Reichshauptstadt*, a *Reichsbank* and a *Reichswehr* and an abundance of imperial symbols.²² The trouble is that this very term or prefix became so deeply discredited by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945. Moreover, the very term *Deutsches Reich* will also be forever tainted by the Holocaust, which was decided upon when the empire was at the highpoint of its military power. In view of this legacy it is understandable why the postwar generation was skeptical of the term and its normative ingredients, and tried to distance itself and the Federal Republic from this concept of German history. Writing about the imperial history of Germany without a clear critical distance could and probably would have been understood as an affirmation of the German *Reich*, which existed until 1945.

The territorial basis of this continental empire came into existence already in the 18th century. The partitions of Poland in 1772 and in 1795 changed Prussia's character until it went out of existence in 1947. Through the expansion into Poland Prussia enhanced its status as a great European power which it had acquired only through the annexation of Silesia in 1740. The partitions also turned Prussia into a multinational state, which ruled over a large population with a distinct and separate national consciousness among its elite. Through the continuation of the partition until 1918 not only Prussia, but also its successor, the German Empire, became a “conquest state.”²³ The “Polish factor” had a profound impact on key

areas of 19th century German history such as state formation, nation building, colonialism and democratization, and it also necessitates to go beyond the analytical framework provided by homogenous nation states.²⁴

As already mentioned the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 is usually considered as a unification and treated on the same level like the foundation of Italy in 1859.²⁵ However, in contrast to Italy, which, upon its unification, ceded territory to neighboring France, the German Empire was built upon the partition of one of its largest neighbors. In 1818 the Prussian province of Silesia formally became part of the German Confederation,²⁶ because Prussia realized that its power within the confederation would increase with the integration of this important province. In 1848 there was a long debate in the national assembly in Frankfurt whether to include the Grand Duchy of Poznań in the German confederation and in the elections. The liberal nationalists pressed hard for an expansion and argued that the Germans had a right to govern Posen because of their supposed cultural superiority and Germany's national interest.²⁷ In 1866 the entire Prussian partition of Poland became a part of the North German Federation and in 1871 was included in the German Empire. First Prussia and then Germany contained ever-larger areas, which were inhabited by people who clearly did not consider themselves as Germans. It should be stressed that there were different motives for and actors of expansion in different periods. Yet their result was that Germany in its different territorial configurations became increasingly less of a German state. In ethno-linguistic terms the Empire of 1871 was not as German as the Confederation of 1815. Millions of Poles and Polish speaking people were included and thus became subjects of German history. None of the western European nation states established in the 19th century stretched over adjacent territories that had been acquired by imperial expansion only two or three generations before. Neither was Italy or Denmark inhabited by a large group of speakers of an entirely different language, who had their own tradition of independent statehood.

The purpose of this argument is not to build up a new kind of German exceptionalism or *Sonderweg* vis-à-vis Western Europe, but to draw conclusions for comparative history. In particular if one pertains to the 19th century, it might be more revealing to compare Germany with other continental empires such as Russia and Austria. In particular the obstacles to democratization in the late Wilhelmine and the Tsarist Empire can be explained by this structural parallel.²⁸ If representative democracies had been established in both countries, the elite loyal to the state in large areas would have become ethnic minorities. For Germany the possession of the Polish partition was even more important than for Russia, because it guaranteed its territorial cohesion and its unequal great power status in Central Europe.

German nationalism in the eastern areas also developed according to the imperial pattern of Eastern Europe. The emancipative nationalism of

the subjugated nationalities inspired the formation of nationalism of the imperial nation, which thus can be regarded as a relative latecomer. Already in the first decades of the 19th century the Polish national movement gave itself a clear political and civilizational mission as an imagined bulwark of the West and of western Christianity against "the East," a strong and binding vision for the future borders of its state, universally agreed upon symbols such as a flag and an agreed upon capital city; in short, it encompassed all the ideology, myths and symbols necessary for a modern national movement. At this same time, the German national activists had yet to decide about the territorial dimensions of Germany; they were close to agreement on symbols such as a flag but still needed a consensus on its capital. The relatively advanced national movement among the Poles fascinated German national activists in the 1830s. However, the enthusiasm about the Polish movement soon changed into rivalry. During the 1848 revolution the German liberals denied the Prussian Poles their own national ambitions and confirmed the imperial rule over Grand Duchy of Posen. This anticipated the future coalition of German nationalists with the Prussian State and the conservative twist of German nationalism, which again can be compared with the Russian, Hungarian and Austro-German case.

Although the Czech national movement came into being later than its Polish neighbor, it also considerably influenced the mobilization and nationalization of German speakers living in the mixed areas. Palácky's refusal to send Czech delegates to Frankfurt provoked the German speaking areas of Bohemia to set up election committees for their own delegates.²⁹ In other words, first came the agitation for the Czech national movement and then the reaction of German speakers. In 1848 a similar situation evolved in Poznań. The Polish movement mobilized supporters, and only then did the German speakers in Poznań organize themselves.³⁰ The political constellation in Bohemia also bore some resemblance to that in the eastern half of Prussia. Like the Poles, the Czechs were demanding democratic reforms in order to be represented according to their share of the population and to govern over Bohemia, whereas the Germans defended their position with the help of the government.³¹ From then on a fateful mixture of conservatism, dependence on the state and anti-democratic attitudes became a common feature of the German national movement in much of the German and in the Austrian Empire. The Polish and Czech national movements juxtaposed themselves against the ruling ethnic group and presented a national ideology which was much more democratic and plebeian. Again, a comparison with the Russian and Habsburg Empires suggests a model of imperial vs. emancipative nationalism. This common model does not mean that one should overlook significant differences between the German and Russian rule in Poland, which in the German case was driven by a feeling of cultural superiority vis-à-vis the Poles that was absent among Russians.

The qualification of German nationalism as imperial and as a response to the activities of the Polish and Czech national movement has again ramifications for our understanding of nationalism and modernity. Nation building and modernization did not move step by step from the West to the East of Europe, as Hans Kohn or Theodor Schieder have claimed in their models of nation building and nation state formation.³² It follows from this that modernity or the level of nation building should not be measured by social and economic structures alone, but understood as a result of increased external and internal communication. By external we mean in particular communication within Europe, but also across the Atlantic Ocean and with other continents. Internal means the communication within social, denominational or ethnic groups, whose outer boundaries can be fluid, or within a certain territorial body like a region or a state. In this communicative model of modernity, the Poles in Poznań and in the other partitioned lands were modern because their elite were intensively connected with France, the United States and other centers of democratic thinking, and because they developed a high level of internal communication. This is why they were able to challenge the German speaking population, which may have been more developed in economic terms, but was lacking external and internal communication. The daily interaction between various ethnic groups in mixed areas, and the structural entanglement of imperial elite, intermediary groups such as the Jews and the various population governed by the empire also helps to explain why national belonging and allegiances became such a serious problem in the second half of the 19th century. The amount and intensity of oral and written communication between these various groups in cities such as Poznań, Prague or Łviv were already very modern while they lacked the institutions channeling the interaction and conflicts between them.

The importance of communication does not mean that social structures should be neglected. The social composition of the German national movement in the Prussian East and in Austria was typical for imperial nations. In the East of the German Empire state servants, the protestant clergy and parts of the bourgeoisie were the bearers of Prussian-German identity. Workers and peasants often remained detached. Moreover, the nation building process in Germany was not completed in 1871. In many areas it just took off around this time, or else was reversed during the *Kulturkampf*, the conflict of the Protestant State with the catholic clergy and Catholics at large. The *Kulturkampf* may have helped to further enhance the national consciousness of the protestant bourgeoisie, but it alienated Catholics, and in particular Slavophone Catholics.³³ It also undercut the formation of a German society that transcended the denominational divisions, a factor which is absent in Russia. Especially if one pertains to rural areas, the suburbs of industrial cities, the eastern half of Prussia, the Polish partition or Silesia, nationally conscious Germans were a minority for a long time.³⁴

German rule was secured by the state, factory owners and the military. With respect to Upper Silesia, the historical sociologist Maria Szmaja has termed it as an example of “internal colonialism.”³⁵

Whether the term “colonialism” is appropriate for labeling all aspects of German rule in the Prussian East is a different question. There is a recent tendency to overstretch this term. If it is used for the German Empire one key difference between internal and external colonialism needs to be underlined: because of racial prejudices there was never an attempt to merge the inhabitants of the Asian and African colonies into the nation.³⁶ In contrast to this there were always ideas and concrete measures to turn the Slavophone population into Germans. In spite of their goal to create a racially cleansed nation even the Nazis pursued a policy that was supposed to assimilate the so-called “pending nationalities” (*schwebendes Volkstum*) in the borderlands. During World War II they developed a so-called *Völkliste* in the annexed Polish territories, which selected people who were thought to be possible targets of Germanization. And even Poles, who were supposed to become slave laborers, were not totally excluded. They were for example included in the social security system, although there would have been much more effective and direct ways to exploit them.³⁷ If one includes the mixed population in the Prussian East into the minority population in the empire, then the fact that it was not a homogenous nation state becomes even more obvious. While the Poles numbered only around ten percent of the Prussian population, there were approximately an equal number of other people like the Sorbs or the Slavophone Upper Silesians who cannot simply be regarded as Germans. Assimilation was most successful among protestant Kashubians and Masurians, but even they preserved their own cultural habits. If one asks about their loyalties, the old saying “*Gott, Kaiser, Vaterland*” (God, Emperor, Fatherland) has a lot of truth in it. In particular among the rural population, God indeed came first and His earthly servants, second the Emperor and only in third place the Fatherland, which in particular among Slavic speakers comprised of the empire as well as the region and the local place (in German *Heimat*, in Polish *mała ojczyzna* or “Little Fatherland”). This set of loyalties can be usefully compared to Russia where the Czar and Orthodoxy were much more viable for Russian or Ukrainian peasants than Russian nationalism.

The various calls and popular movements for secession after World War I in Upper Silesia, in Lusatia and in other areas on the fringe of the German Empire indicate that the spread and depth of German national identities was still limited in the early 20th century. The Empire was a conglomeration of various people, and when it fell apart, it was not simply replaced by a national community or a *Völksgemeinschaft*, which even the Nazis were not able to create. As it turned out, stability was rather provided by the Empire with its symbols of power such as the dynasty and the military. It was one of the mistakes of the Weimar Republic that it did not present

itself to its own population as a saturated nation state, but as an amputated empire that always sought to retrieve the lost territories in the East.

The rule over the Polish partition is also crucial for understanding the imperial character of German history because it was in these areas, where German colonialism flourished. Evidence of this is provided in Gustav Freytag's novel *Soll und Haben*, which was published in 1855 but remained the most popular German novel until the interwar period. In this book, the author states that Poles "have no culture," are unable to create "civilization and progress" or to run their own state.³⁸ Although some of these stereotypes are still in line with the enlightened legitimization for the partition of Poland, there are new elements in Freytag's portrayal of Poles. According to him, only the Germans could educate the Poles to become proper human beings and therefore should rule and "colonize" them.³⁹ Characteristic for the novel was the blatant racism applied to Slavs, in general, and to Poles, in particular, which recalls Russian attitudes towards the Caucasian peoples in the 19th century. As one of the main heroes of Freytag's novel states, "there is no race, which is less able to move forward and to acquire humanity and education than the Slavic one."⁴⁰ Freytag's book was the most widely read novel in the German Empire, and set an example for a body of colonial literature about the "eastern marches" (*Ostmarkenliteratur*).⁴¹ Clearly, the internal colonialism⁴² and racism was not restricted to the East, but became popular throughout the entire country. When Germany acquired its overseas colonies, the already established colonialism and racism merely had to be extended to black Africans and Asians, a task undertaken by Freytag himself as a prominent activist of the "*Kolonialverein*." The main difference between the Polish territories and the external colonies was that for a long time Poles and Slavic speakers were still regarded as possible objects of assimilation. According to Freytag, they could still be raised to the higher level of German civilization if only they gave up their language and culture.

Freytag's novel also marks the beginning of the public re-interpretation of the mediaeval "*Ostsiedlung*," that is the mediaeval settlement of vast areas East of the rivers Elbe and Saale by German speakers, into a modern movement of colonization. In fact there are many differences between these two movements. When hundreds of thousands of German speakers migrated to Eastern Brandenburg, Pomerania, Silesia and the borderlands of the kingdom of Bohemia between the 12th and 14th century, they neither had a consciousness as modern colonizers nor as Germans in the sense of the 19th century.⁴³ They mostly perceived themselves as settlers, and by their profession or social status. Frederick II renewed the settlers movement as an attempt to increase the economic productivity of Prussia. He called the new settlements "*Kolonien*," which is derived from the French word "Colon" or "*Siedler*" (settler) in German. Frederick II did not yet think in terms of modern colonialism. But for legitimizing the partition of Poland he used and popularized the ideology of Germans as cultural missionaries or

Kulturträger, who supposedly brought culture to the backward and anarchic Poles.⁴⁴ This *Kulturträgetum* in the East became one of the main tools to legitimize the continuation of the partition and the suppression of Polish demands for cultural or political autonomy in the 1830s. Freytag sharpened this argument about the civilizational gap between Germans and Poles, and introduced the aforementioned racial differentiation. In the late 19th century the equation between the medieval “*Ostsiedlung*” and modern colonialism became common in public discourses, and it went on in the interwar period. A book published in 1921 turned the settlers’ movement into “the mightiest deed of colonization the German people” (the much more punchy title in German was: *Der Zug nach Osten. Die kolonisatorische Großtat des deutschen Volkes*).⁴⁵ Hence, at least in public discourses the medieval and early modern colonization was re-interpreted as a historical mission of the Germans. Even quite a lot of postwar books published in the Federal Republic still contain this ideology of Germans as “*Kulturträger*.”

These colonial attitudes about the Poles were so widespread that they also influenced one of the fathers of the comparative method, Max Weber. In his inaugural speech at the University of Freiburg about “The Nation State and National Economic Policy” Weber analyzed why German farm workers were increasingly being replaced by Poles. He concluded “that physical and psychological racial differences” were the most important factors. According to him, “the Slavic races” and Poles were by their nature content with lower living standards because “they eat the grass from the floor.”⁴⁶ In order to reverse the “victory” of Polish farm workers against their German counterparts, Weber demanded a “systematic colonization” of the Polish territories, the division of large landed estates into medium size farmsteads, to be handed over to ethnic Germans. Weber also pleaded the case to protect these farmers from economic pressure by establishing market rules, and for the closure of the border in order to stem “the Polish flood.” The German government put these demands into practice, and in 1908 even passed a law that allowed the expropriation of Polish landowners, a clear violation of the constitution.⁴⁷

The history of the German State established in 1871 was deeply changed precisely because of its imperial character. According to William W. Hagen, the policy against the Poles “was one of the monarchy’s defenses against social and political modernization.”⁴⁸ Hence, the Polish factor—if we still allow ourselves to speak in terms of causal explanations—is of central relevance for explaining why the German Empire was unable to reform itself, to democratize, and why the “*Rechtsstaat*” and the constitution were weakened in the two decades before World War I.

Anti-Polonism was also closely connected with the rise of anti-Semitism. In his aforementioned novel Gustav Freytag not only portrayed German Jews as evil capitalists, but he also let them speak German with a Polish syntax.⁴⁹ Hence, he made vile easterners out of the German Jews who were

in fact already highly assimilated.⁵⁰ At the turn of the century, a portrayal of German Jews as oriental, impossible to integrate and potentially dangerous was already commonplace in Prussia. Both Jews and Poles were defined as “undesirable elements,” and between 1883–1885 the empire even resorted to the expulsion of 32,000 Poles and Polish Jews to the Russian and Austrian partition of Poland.⁵¹ There also were serious anti-Semitic riots in the Eastern parts of Prussia around the turn of the century.⁵² Again the best possible object of comparison would be anti-Semitic incidents across the border in the Russian partition of Poland.

Similar to the Russian case it is difficult to distinguish between the late imperial rule and the policies of what Brubaker has called a “nationalizing nation state.”⁵³ The German Empire pursued its anti-Polish policies because it *wanted* to become a homogenous nation state. The law of settlement passed in 1886 is an important watershed between a traditional imperial rule and a nationalizing policy which was more typical for the age of nationalism and the period after World War I. The settlement policies were supposed to turn the Polish partition into ethnic German lands. These policies failed as badly as the attempts of Russification in Tsarist Poland. Yet it should not be viewed only as a failure. The assimilatory policies of two “nationalizing empires” (in contrast to the Habsburg Empire) clearly demonstrate that they responded to the challenge raised by nationalism and adopted nationalist policies and ideologies.

In view of developments in Russia one should not underestimate one key achievement of the German Empire. Although the latter remained internally very diverse in cultural and economic terms, it was able to consolidate a federal tradition. The Bavarians, the Swabians, the Holsteiners etc. preserved a distinct regional identity, but they also came to identify themselves as Germans and as citizens of the empire. Except on the fringes of the empire and among its Slavophone citizens, regional and national identities were mutually comprehensible and not exclusive. This explains why after the consolidation of the Weimar Republic no Bavarian or any national movement based on a region came into existence, although for example in Munich there would have been an abundance of potential symbols for independence like the Bavarian National Theatre. The achievement of this integration was greatly facilitated by the tradition of the German national movement. Before the revolution of 1848, it already had a very strong regional component. At public gatherings the members of the national movement always wore symbols and showed flags of their home regions. As Celia Applegate and Alon Confino have shown the values and the ideology of the nation were transmitted through the regions.⁵⁴ It was one of the key weaknesses of the much more centralized Weimar Republic that it failed to exploit the regional identities for its own advantage on all-German level. In contrast to this the Federal Republic returned to the tradition of federalism, and was able to strengthen the identification by its citizens with the state in

this indirect way.⁵⁵ This federal tradition, however, was not invented in the German Empire, but was a heritage of the old empire which ceased to exist in 1806.

If one includes the whole range of empire in German history, its continental and maritime components, it is also possible to take a first step toward a chronological model of German Empire in the “long” 19th century.⁵⁶ The first period lasted from 1772, the first Polish partition until 1830. In this half century, the imperial rule applied by Prussia (and Austria) was rather indirect and informal. The Polish nobility kept most of its local powers and suffered few cultural restrictions. After the failed November uprising in Poland, the Prussian government made first attempts to Germanize the Polish partition, but then some measures were taken back after Flottwell was replaced as governor of Poznań. This second period was characterized by an undecided imperial policy, which oscillated between attempts to assimilate the Poles and to grant them some degree of cultural autonomy. A pivotal change occurred through the Polish uprising in 1863, which confirmed Prussia’s fear of secession. After this uprising the government definitely turned to a policy of forced assimilation that was intensified during the *Kulturkampf*. Prussian rule became more formal and direct, and had an impact even on remote rural areas. The fourth period of empire started in the mid-1880s, when Germany acquired a number of overseas colonies. In the Polish partition lands it simultaneously resorted to a population policy in order to change the ethnic composition of this territory. The law of settlement of 1886 introduced a new dimension, because the Empire took measures to become a homogenous nation state throughout its entire continental territory. Had this policy worked the Empire would have become more “western,” i.e. like France or England, which were maritime empires with a nation state at its core. The third and fourth periods could be of special interest for the comparative study of empire because they show how weak empires are if faced with a popular democratic nationalism. Even a “strong” state like Prussia and since 1871 the German Empire did not manage to effectively fight a national minority which chose not to be ruled by an empire.⁵⁷ The British had a similar experience in Ireland, the French in Algeria. Those two examples also show that in the 19th century the combination of imperial rule over overseas and over adjacent territories was not exceptional in Europe. While in the most cases the decolonization of overseas colonies occurred relatively quickly and smoothly, giving up “internal colonies” like Algeria and the lands of Polish partition turned out to be a more painful process. After World War I Germany could never accept that the “eastern marches” were lost. France stood on the brink of a civil war when it had to give up Algeria. Arguably there are parallels to parts of the Caucasus and the present conflicts there.

In Germany the Nazis got into power not only because of the breakdown of the Weimar Republic and the world economic crisis, but also be-

cause they promised to return the glory and power of the continental empire forfeited in World War I. The Germans lost their empire for a third time in 1945, and the successor states of the "Third Reich" preferred to integrate the word "republic" in their state names while abolishing the empire from there. Can historians ignore the Nazi period in their models of empire? The German case offers interesting comparative questions but also tricky problems that do not yet appear to have been solved.

If the Germany that existed between 1871 and 1918 is not a priori considered as a nation state, one can also recognize a more republican tradition of today's Federal Republic. In this perspective the formation of a German nation state occurred only after World War I through the cessation of territories in favor of Poland. The united Federal Republic of Germany also came into being by accepting the final loss of territory to Poland in 1991. If one wants to build up a continuity between the unification of 1990 and similar events in earlier moments of German history, it might make more sense to draw a parallel to 1919, and not between Kohl and Bismarck.

NOTES

- 1 See D. Lieven, *Empire: the Russian Empire and its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). For more historical literature on the subject see the excellent bibliography in D. Lieven, *Empire*, 445–76.
- 2 D. Lieven, *Empire*, xiv. Alfred Rieber uses similar elements for his definition of empire. See Alfred J. Rieber, "Approaches to Empire," in <http://empires.ru/publicarch/?tildte=20021027>. A Russian version of the article is forthcoming in the journal *Istoricheskie zapiski*.
- 3 Among the exceptions in the recent literature is A. Motyl, *Imperial Ends. The Decay, Collapse and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
- 4 This thesis was put forward most prominently by H.-U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Köln: Kiepenheuer&Witsch, 1969), 464. According to Wehler the German Empire acquired its colonies in order to distract attention from economic problems and in order to raise the popularity of Bismarck's Bonapartist regime. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, the most prominent German specialist on imperialism, criticized Wehler's emphasis on the personal role of Bismarck, but overall confirmed his thesis. See Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Der europäische Imperialismus. Aufsätze und Abhandlungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 82f. and 241. Wehler's contention that there was a priority of interior policy ("Primat der Innenpolitik") was disputed by Winfried Baumgart, *Deutschland im Zeitalter des Imperialismus 1890–1914. Grundkräfte, Thesen und Strukturen. Vierte, ergänzte Auflage* (Stuttgart: Verlag Kohlhammer, 1982), 12–17. It was again confirmed in a more recent textbook by Michael Fröhlich, *Imperialismus. Deutsche Kolonial- und Weltpolitik 1880–1914* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994, 1994), 33.
- 5 This key ingredient of modernization theories has been criticized convincingly from a different viewpoint by Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography on Sub-National Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review* 104 (October 1999): 1157–1182.

- 6 See L. H. Gann, "Marginal Colonialism. The German Case" in A. J. Knoll, L. H. Gann, eds., *Germans in the Tropics. Essays in German Colonial History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 1–17.
- 7 This older view on "colonial adventures" and the marginalization of the impact of colonialism has been criticized by Sebastian Conrad, "Doppelte Marginalisierung. Plädoyer für eine transnationale Perspektive auf die deutsche Geschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2001): 145–169, here 149.
- 8 Besides several German publications there is also a dissertation in English language which gives an account of this cruel war. See J. B. Gewald, *Towards Redemption: A Socio-Political History of the Hero of Namibia between 1890 and 1923* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996).
- 9 See a compilation of these studies in Sebastian Conrad und Shalini Randeria, "Einleitung. Geteilte Geschichten—Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt" in S. Conrad, Sh. Randeria, eds., *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 2002), 9–49, here: 39–42. Among the most important recent studies published in Germany are: B. Kundrus, ed., *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2003); B. Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten. Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien* (Köln: Böhlau, 2003); A. Honold, O. Simons, eds., *Kolonialismus als Kultur. Literatur, Medien, Wissenschaft in der deutschen Gründerzeit des Fremden* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002); P. Große, *Kolonialismus, Eugenik und bürgerliche gesellschaft in Deutschland 1850–1918* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2000).
- 10 Ch. Rogowski, "'Heraus mit unseren Kolonien!' Der Kolonialrevisionsismus der Weimarer Republik und die 'Hamburger Kolonialwoche' von 1926" in B. Kundrus, ed., *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2003), 243–262.
- 11 See U. van der Heyden, J. Zeller, eds., *Kolonialmetropole Berlin. Eine Spurensuche* (Berlin: Berlin edition, 2002).
- 12 Apart from a few exceptions Poland and Poles were mostly absent in the so-called "allgemeine Geschichte" in postwar Germany. Among the exceptions are the monographs: M. Broszat, *200 Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (München 1963); Ch. Klessmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet 1870–1945. Soziale Integration und nationale Subkultur einer Minderheit in der deutschen Industriegesellschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); H.-U. Wehler, *Sozialdemokratie und Nationalstaat: Nationalitätenfragen in Deutschland 1840–1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).
- 13 About the "Ostforschung" see, M. Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1988). A short and precise overview, which encompasses the postwar history of the "Ostforschung" is also provided by J. Hackmann, *Ostpreußen und Westpreußen in deutscher und polnischer Sicht. Landesgeschichte als Beziehungs-geschichtliches Problem* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), 169–176, 306–321.
- 14 T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918. Erster Band. Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (München: Beck Verlag, 1990), 9.
- 15 Idem, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866. Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (München: Beck Verlag 1987).
- 16 See J. Sheehan, "What is German History? Reflection on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography," *Journal of Modern European History* 53 (1981): 1–23; idem, *German history, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 908–909.

- 17 Even the first European constitution passed by the Polish parliament in 1791 is left out entirely. The absence of Central Europe is also characteristic of the journal established by the Bielefeld School of social history, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. See L. Raphael, "Nationalzentrierte Sozialgeschichte in programmatischer Absicht. Die Zeitschrift, Geschichte und Gesellschaft' in den ersten 25 Jahren ihres Bestehens," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25 (1999): 5–37.
- 18 See H.-U. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, Von der Reformära bis zur industriellen und politischen "Deutschen Doppelrevolution" 1815–1845/49*, Zweiter Band; Dritter Band (München: C.H. Beck, 1987), 961–965, 1068–1071, 1075–1077. Poland is not at all mentioned in the conclusion about the causes of the "Sonderweg" of the Empire on pages 1250–1295.
- 19 For a condensed overview of the "Sonderweg" thesis and its main proponents see J. Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German *Sonderweg*," *History and Theory* 38, no. 1, (1999): 40–51, 41–43. Kocka's article can be viewed as an attempt to salvage a reduced core of the *Sonderweg* thesis. However, key *Sonderweg* factors such as bureaucratization and the simultaneity of deep structural changes in politics, society and the economy do not hold up empirically if Bohemia is integrated in the comparative scheme. Czech history was influenced by the very same factors, and yet it ended in the establishment of one the most stable democracies in interwar Europe.
- 20 In fact the understanding of the term society by postwar German social history can be studied in an influential volume edited by H.-U. Wehler in the 1960s. See W. Conze, "Sozialgeschichte," in H.-U. Wehler, ed., *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte*, 2 Auflage (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1968), 19–26. W. Conze and his followers understood a society as a social configuration, which transcended class and social differences, but they did not reflect about cultural boundaries of and within modern societies.
- 21 See D. Langewiesche, "Föderativer Nationalismus als Erbe der deutschen Reichsnation: Über Föderalismus und Zentralismus in der deutschen Nationalgeschichte" in D. Langewiesche, G. Schmidt, eds., *Föderative Nation. Deutschlandkonzepte von der Reformation bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000), 215–242. See also D. Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa* (München: C.H. Beck, 2000), 190–216.
- 22 For the symbolic level of the empire see T. Schieder, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Köln: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1961), 82–88. It needs to be stressed that the predominance of imperial symbols and the connections with the Holy Roman Empire were highly disputed, in particular among national liberals.
- 23 See for this term A. Rieber, "Approaches", 2.
- 24 An older, but still very useful analytical framework for the studying of the entangled character of German and Polish history is provided by K. Zernack, "Das Jahrtausend deutsch-polnischer Beziehungsgeschichte als geschichtswissenschaftliches Problemfeld und Forschungsaufgabe" in K. Zernack, ed., *Preußen—Deutschland—Polen. Aufsätze zur Geschichte der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1991), 3–42.
- 25 See for example J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 96–122.
- 26 See M. Weber, *Das Verhältnis Schlesiens zum Alten Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1992), 396. Many textbooks falsely claim that this already happened in 1815.
- 27 For the entire debate see M. G. Müller and B. Schönemann, *Die "Polen-Debatte" in der Frankfurter Paulskirche* (Frankfurt a.M.: Diesterweg Verlag, 1991).

- 28 For this structural connection see Ph. Ther, "Etnische homogenisierung als rem op democratische ontwikkeling," *Nieuwste tijd. Kwartaalschrift voor eigentijdse geschiedenis* 2 (2002): 60–72.
- 29 See G. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague 1861–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 26.
- 30 See Krzysztof Makowski, "Das Grossherzogtum Posen im Revolutionsjahr 1848", in R. Jaworski, R. Luft, eds., *1848/49. Revolutionen in Ostmitteleuropa* (München: Oldenbourg, 1996), 149–172. The events can also be followed in a comprehensive documentation of sources. See H. Booms, M. Wojciechowski, *Deutsche und Polen in der Revolution 1848–1849. Dokumente aus deutschen und polnischen Archiven* (Boppard a.R.: Boldt, 1991).
- 31 See J. Křen, *Konfliktgemeinschaft. Tschechen und Deutsche 1780–1918* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996). Křen's book is also one of the few publications which mastered the task of writing a history of relations between two polities which cannot be understood in isolation from each other.
- 32 See H. Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); T. Schieder, "Typologie und Erscheinungsformen des Nationalstaats in Europa," in O. Dann, H.-U. Wehler, eds., *Nationalismus und Nationalstaat: Studien zum nationalen Problem im modernen Europa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 65–86 [Schieder originally wrote his republished text in the 1960s].
- 33 See L. Trzeciakowski, *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
- 34 For Upper Silesia see Ph. Ther, "Die Grenzen des Nationalismus: Der Wandel von Identitäten in Oberschlesien von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1939," in U. von Hirschhausen, J. Leonhard, eds., *Nationalismen in Europa: West und Osteuropa im Vergleich* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2001), 322–346; and a recently published collective volume K. Struve, Ph. Ther, eds., *Die Grenzen der Nationen: Identitätenwandel in Oberschlesien in der Neuzeit* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2002). For the the Serbs, Kashubs and other minorities see, H. H. Hahn, P. Kunze, eds., *Nationale Minderheiten und Minderheitenpolitik in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1999).
- 35 See M. Szmeja, *Niemcy? Polacy? Ślązacy! Rodzimi mieszkańcy Opolszczyzny w świetle analiz socjologicznych* (Kraków: Universitas, 2000), 65–74.
- 36 See J. Osterhammel, *Kolonialismus. Geschichte—Formen—Folgen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1995), 90–94, 112–119.
- 37 For this policy see U. Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter. Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1985), 92ff.; U. Herbert, "Nicht entschädigungsfähig? Die Wiedergutmachungsansprüche der Ausländer" in L. Herbst, C. Goschler, eds., *Wiedergutmachung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. by (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1989), 273–302.
- 38 G. Freytag, "Soll und Haben. Roman in Sechs Büchern, Erster Teil," in G. Freytag, *Gesammelte Werke*. Neue wohlfeile Ausgabe (Berlin u. Leipzig: E. Hirzel u. H. Klemm, n.d.), 395–396, where the domination of nobles and the weak position of burghers are made responsible for the ills of Poland.
- 39 For the general stereotypes about the Poles in imperial Germany see: H. Feindt, ed., *Studien zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Polenbildes. 1848–1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995); K. Wajda, *Polacy i Niemcy. Z badań nad kształtowaniem heterostereotypów etnicznych* (Toruń: Marszałek, 1991); H. Orłowski, "Polnische Wirtschaft:." *Zum deutschen Polendiskurs in der Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996); H. von Zitzewitz, *Das deutsche Polenbild in der*

- Geschichte. Entstehung—Einflüsse—Auswirkungen* (Köln: Böhlau, 1991). The Polish responses to these German stereotypes are shown with many caricatures in W. Wrzesiński, *Sąsiad czy wróg? Ze studiów nad kształtowaniem obrazu Niemca w Polsce w latach 1795–1939* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1992).
- 40 G. Freytag, "Soll und Haben", 394.
 - 41 See for this subject a dissertation recently submitted at University of California, Berkeley: K. Kopp, *Contesting Borders: German Colonial Discourse and the Polish Eastern Territories* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California: PhD Dissertation, Spring 2001).
 - 42 See for this term M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536–1966* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1977).
 - 43 For the movement of German settlers to the East in the medieval and early modern history see W. Schlesinger, ed., *Die deutsche Ostsiedlung des Mittelalters als Problem der europäischen Geschichte* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1975).
 - 44 For this legitimization of the partition see J. Hackmann, *Ostpreußen und Westpreußen in deutscher und polnischer Sicht. Landesgeschichte als beziehungsgehistorisches Problem* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996).
 - 45 See K. Hampe, *Der Zug nach Osten. Die kolonisatorische Großtat des deutschen Volkes* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921).
 - 46 "Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik: Akademische Antrittrede von Dr. Max Weber o. ö. Professor der Staatswissenschaften in Freiburg i.B." in M. Weber, *Schriften und Reden*, Bd. 4, 2. Halbband *Landarbeiterfrage, Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik. Schriften und Reden 1892–1899* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 535–74. Translated quotes are from 545, 551 and 553. For a wider picture of German attitudes toward Poland see H. Orlowski, "Polische Wirtschaft": *Zum deutschen Polendiskurs in der Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996).
 - 47 See M. Broszat, *200 Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (München: Ehrenwirth Verlag), 1963, 114.
 - 48 W. W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews. The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 199. Cf. B. Balzer, *Die preußische Polenpolitik 1894–1908 und die Haltung der deutschen konservativen und liberalen Parteien (unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Provinz Posen)* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 1990), 290.
 - 49 Unfortunately the connection between anti-Polishness and anti-Semitism has hardly been researched. For a recent reassessment of anti-Semitism and German nationalism see Shulamit Volkov, "Nationalismus, Antisemitismus und die deutsche Geschichtsschreibung" in M. Hettling, P. Nolte, eds., *Nation und Gesellschaft in Deutschland. Historische Essays* (München: Beck Verlag, 1996), 208–219, 214–217.
 - 50 An impressive study about the Jews upon the example of the Silesian capital Breslau has been written by T. van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer. Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).
 - 51 See D. Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschließen. Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2001), 265. According to Gosewinkel, the restrictions on immigrations were even more directed against Jews than against Poles. *Ibid.*, 270–277.
 - 52 See two recent case studies about anti-Jewish violence: Ch. Hoffmann, "Political Culture and Violence against Minorities: The Anti-Semitic Riots in Pomerania

- and West Prussia" in Ch. Hoffmann, W. Bergmann, H. W. Smith, eds., *Anti-Semitic Riots in Modern German History* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 67–92; H. W. Smith, "Konitz 1900: Ritual Murder and anti-Semitic Violence" in Ch. Hoffmann, W. Bergmann, H. W. Smith, eds., *Anti-Semitic Riots*, 93–122.
- 53 For this term see R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5.
- 54 C. Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials. The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 1990); A. Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). A theoretical model for the relationship between region and nation in Germany is offered by S. Weichlein, "Das Spannungsfeld von nationaler und regionaler Identität" in W. Bramke, T. Adam, eds., *Politische Kultur in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa* (Leipzig: Universitätsverlag, 1999), 241–252.
- 55 The inclusion of various regional identities into the identity of West Germany was also quite an achievement compared to Spain, where the various regionalisms turned into nationalisms during the twentieth century. A summary explanation might be found in the fact that imperial as well as postwar Germany were relatively strong states, and that the Federal Republic was turned into a democracy soon after the war. For the Spanish nationalisms see the article by S. Balfour in this volume. For the Catalan and the Galician cases in Spain see also J. M. Fradera, "Regionalism and Nationalism: Catalonia within modern Spain" in Ph. Ther, H. Sundhaussen, eds., *Regionale Bewegungen und Regionalismen in europäischen Zwischenräumen seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2003), 3–19; X.-M. Nuñez, "Zwischen regionaler Selbstwahrnehmung und radikalem Ethnonationalismus: Galicien, 1960–2000" in Ph. Ther, H. Sundhaussen, *Regionale Bewegungen*, 161–184.
- 56 For an earlier model of periodization see W. J. Mommsen, *Der europäische Imperialismus*, 215–228. Mommsen distinguishes between an "early imperialism" (1815–1881) and a "high imperialism" (1881–1918).
- 57 In the Russian case it was rather the weakness of the state which was blamed for the failure of Russification in Ukraine. See A. Miller "Russko-ukrainskie ot-nosheniia v 19 i v nachale 20 veka. Russifikatsiia i prichiny eiо neudachi" *Russkii istoricheskii zhurnal* 1 (1998): 131–148.

2. LEGITIMACY AND IMPERIAL RULE

Justifying Political Power in 19th Century Europe: the Habsburg Monarchy and Beyond

MACIEJ JANOWSKI

Two connected problems gave rise to the present essay.¹ The first is that of the specific character of imperial legitimization. Did “empires” and “nation states” (however imprecise the division between them) try to justify their power in the same or in different ways?

The second problem is that of specifically “modern” or “pre-modern” modes of legitimizing political power. We would probably tend to treat some arguments as more “traditional” (e.g. divine right of kings) and others as more “modern” (e.g. popular sovereignty). Even casual knowledge of the sources demonstrates, however, that numerous authors tend to “switch” (often in the same paragraph if not the same sentence) from one mode of explanation to another. This, I believe, does require some explanation. Did they fail to notice the internal discrepancy of both modes of argumentation; did they ignore it consciously? Or is our initial supposition not well founded that two separate modes existed?

Before we come to the sources, let us note that Weberian concepts of legitimacy, whatever their value, are of no use here. By “legitimization” or “justification” I simply mean attempts to ground the right to rule in universally accepted principles.² My task, therefore, is to examine which principles were invoked for this purpose. Treated in this way, the enquiry into the legitimization principles is not an enquiry into how power works; it is rather an interrogation of images; it forms a part of the history of mentalities rather than of political history.

I consciously put aside the whole problem of authorial “intent” in the texts under analysis. The eternal question “did they really mean what they wrote” is irrelevant for my present aim. Metaphor matters, phraseology matters; it is, I believe, perfectly reasonable to assume that a text usually represents the ideas of *somebody* but not necessarily its author’s. Even pure propaganda is usually written to convince somebody, therefore the author must take into account the opinions of his age. Even if, as is undoubtedly often the case, various expressions of loyalty were written only to conform to expectations of the ruling strata, they could still not fail to be influenced by *really* professed opinions. Cynical sycophants are, as a rule, much more sincere than they themselves perhaps suppose.

From my present point of view the context of everyday politics is irrelevant too. Every text can be explained by showing that it was meant to fit a specific context at a specific time, whether it concerns party strife, personal or ethnic rivalry, etc. There is, however, more than that in the sources. We are entitled to treat them as elements of long range developments of intellectual history irrespectively of their immediate context.

Like everything else “justification” of political power can be more or less understood widely or narrowly. In the widest sense, everything is legitimization. A sociologist as ingenious as Norbert Elias can easily demonstrate how the fact of using or not using handkerchiefs can serve as an important indicator of our beliefs about the nature of social organization. Art historians are able to show how numerous and various structures of power and domination are coded in such a seemingly innocent genre as landscape painting. I admire such attempts without trying to emulate them and I prefer the narrower understanding of justification. I am not interested in “unmasking” anything, in showing something that allegedly is hidden behind something else. I understand the task of a historian as that of reconstructing the inner logic of actions, ideas or events rather than of unveiling the “real” motives or implications. Half-jokingly (but half-seriously too) I would like to counter the prevailing “methodology of suspicion” with the contrary principle of “unlimited confidence in the sources.”

Let us try to list, without any claim to order or a deeper analysis, the main arguments that could have been used by defenders of any political regime in the 19th century. This list is meant only to promote further reflection. To start with—history: it can be used in two different meanings. First of all as “historical right,” then—as “logic of history.” Opposed to history—nature. The conflict between “natural” and “historical” rights forms an important element of the ideological struggles in the period under consideration. Opposed to nature, but under a different angle—“culture.” The quality of being “cultural” was universally supposed to give some rights that the “non-cultural” ones are devoid of, especially the right to spread culture. In the 19th century the concepts of “Culturstaat”³ and “Culturnation” were elaborated theoretically and widely accepted.

Progress is in some respects relative to “history” and in others to “culture.” It is close to “logic of history” as far as it may serve as justification of various governments considering themselves “progressive.” From another point of view, “progress,” as culture, can be “spread” and the fact of spreading progress over a given territory is always an excellent argument for retaining the territory in question under the paternal cure of the “progressive” government.

The next two arguments are contrary one to another. One appeals to unity, another to diversity. A government that can demonstrate the unity and homogeneity of governed lands is usually in a better position than one that cannot. Unity can be geographical, historical, economic, cultural, reli-

gious. As we know, in the course of the 19th century the ethno-linguistic unity came to be considered as more important than any other one. Thus, modern nationalist arguments can be treated as a part of the old “unity” argument. On the other hand, however, the governments ruling over diverse lands can use similar arguments. They can invoke the diversity of languages, religions and historical traditions precisely as the proof of their strength and legitimacy of their claims that are recognized by different groups of subjects. This “diversity argument” is of course rooted in the imperial tradition; the Jubilees of Queen Victoria (1887, 1897) provide the best instances of its implementation.

The list could be easily continued. What has been said, however, may suffice to illustrate the nature of ideas we are interested in. What follows, is an attempt to show their interdependence and to give examples of puzzles that may be assembled out of the pieces mentioned above.

Let’s exchange the telescope for the microscope and look at details. The time is 1898, the place is Eisenstadt in Austria. At the military school a celebration is held to honor the golden jubilee of Francis Joseph. The pupils present an appropriate cantata, written especially for the occasion by one of the teachers (with music by another teacher). In the *finale*, just before the *Gott erhalte*, the choir sings⁴:

*Blitzesboten, fernhin dringend
Durch die weite Monarchie
Schienenpfade, Fels bezwingend
Dienen Kunst und Industrie.
Bildungsstätten stiften Segen
Für das hoffnungsvoll’ Geschlecht
Weise Staatsgesetze pflegen
Freier Bürger gleiches Recht!*

Here we have an excellent example of the dualism mentioned at the beginning of the present essay. The phrases evidently taken from Enlightenment-liberal tradition (especially the last verse of the quoted stanza) coexist with monarchist loyalty in the most traditional vein. We recognize a certain pattern; this is how Sarastro could have sung in the *Magic Flute*. The equal sympathy for enlightened-liberal-rationalist-progressivist tenets and for the monarchical rule is, after all, the leading feature of the ideology of enlightened absolutism, as developed in continental Europe (and especially in Germany) throughout the 18th century. For the time being we put aside the interesting question of whether such a conjunction was only the effect of the Josephinist tradition, peculiar to the Habsburg lands, or whether it was to be found in other parts of Europe as well.

Similar examples of mixed “modern” and “traditional” legitimizing arguments could be multiplied at will. There is, however, something more at

stake than the mere “mixture.” The year is 1852, the place is Hermannstadt (Nagyszeben, Sibiu) in Transylvania. The imperial visit to Hungary and Transylvania is meant to symbolically celebrate the re-conquering of the mutinied provinces that took place in 1849. In the Transylvanian–Saxon (i.e. German) city of Hermannstadt the monarch is shown the splendid achievements of the industrious local inhabitants. These achievements are presented by representatives of the four ethnic groups: Germans, Hungarians, Romanians and Gypsies. The political meaning is too obvious to stress here. The *Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten* was the leading argument in the propaganda of the imperial government struggling against the Hungarian revolution. It was only in 1848 that a journal of Austro-German liberals (*Der Ostbote*) tried to reduce *ad absurdum* the national aspirations of small Habsburg nationalities by publishing a fictitious manifesto of a Gypsy nationality. After just 4 years, the same Gypsy nationality is presented to the Emperor himself as equal not only to the Magyars but to the Germans too! The usage of the “politically correct” term *Rumaenen* (Romanians) instead of the then prevailing term *Walachen* (Wallachians) is another clear sign of the tendency to stress the position of the underprivileged *vis-à-vis* their masters.⁵

How should we interpret this case? Is it a bow towards the “modern” liberal idea of equality of nationalities understood as corporate entities, or is it an age-old tradition of a father-like monarch whose paternal emotion embraces all peoples living under his potent scepter? It seems that the “traditional” and “modern” ways of justifying political power are entangled so tightly that disentangling may often be impossible. One is tempted to suppose that assigning any given text or form of behavior to a “modern” or “traditional” side is only a historian’s preference for stressing intuitively one aspect or another. It is not a mixture; it is a fusion. Another example may help to shed some light on the nature of this fusion.

July 1867, at the Hungarian coronation of Francis Joseph and Elisabeth in Buda, much care has been taken to make the coronation that was to mark the reconciliation between Hungarians and their King fit into the traditional Hungarian ritual. The stage was new. Traditionally, the coronations took place at Pozsony (Bratislava, Pressburg) which had played the role of the Hungarian capital since the Turks had occupied most of the country, (before that, in the Middle Ages, the coronation town was Székesfehérvár [Alba Regia, Stuhlweissenburg]). The setting, however, was reconstructed as faithfully as possible, with all the crucial elements of the ceremonial duly reintegrated into new topography. An elegant album was published both in German and in Hungarian, with an essay by the well-known journalist, Max Falk, explaining the meaning and importance of the act.⁶ Falk spares no trouble in explaining the importance of the coronation in the *modern* world, as if he felt somehow that AD 1867 coronations *do* need justification. In a hereditary monarchy—writes Falk—a ruler, inheriting the

right to the throne at the moment of death or abdication of his predecessor, does not, theoretically speaking, need a coronation to confirm his rights. However, as a marriage, being from the legal point of view a secular act creating certain legal obligations, requires, in the eyes of a religious people, a Church ceremony to be considered valid, so the hereditary principle, within Christian European tradition, requires corroboration by the religious ceremony of a coronation. In the Hungarian case yet another element appears—that of the coronation oath. Coronation can be understood as the signing of a contract, without which the hereditary monarch, although legitimate, cannot fulfil his functions.

Falk's arguments, in essence if not in wording, are such as are often used even now. Coronation is considered not only a tradition but also a formal condition of obtaining a function—in the same way as, say, today a state president cannot enter his office without a formal oath, although obviously, legitimate character of his office flows from election not from taking an oath. Were this the whole story, we could say that coronation has been saved but the price to pay was its total *Entzauberung*; no metaphysics, religion or mysticism is connected with this constitutional-traditional rite. A confirmation of this opinion could be found by examining the technicalities of the coronation. The bureaucratic machine of a modern capitalist state was used for the sake of a pseudo-feudal "invented tradition." Care was taken to distribute press reports and graphic images of the coronation. The last Hungarian coronation was filmed and even now two generations later, can be seen on videotape by every visitor of the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest. A modern monarchy turns into an element of mass society—completely contrary to the medieval practice where the coronation ceremonies were on ideological (and not only on practical) reasons confined to the aristocratic elite present in the church. One is tempted to suppose that the form is old, but the content essentially new.

It is, however, not necessarily so. The album mentioned above contains a number of engravings delineating the principal moments of the coronation and accompanying ceremonies. Interestingly enough a satirical vein is unmistakably present in some of them, namely those dealing with the common people. The greedy figures tearing apart the purple carpet in front of the coronation church even before the monarch managed to enter the porch, the merry crowd rejoicing on a suburban field on account of the festivity and roasting a gigantic ox over a gigantic fire, are presented in a typical fashion of 19th century *genre* engravings (and awake association with Phiz and Seymour's illustrations for *The Pickwick Papers*). This connection of popular and trivial with the *sacrosanct* of religious-patriotic universe is reminiscent of the "world upside down" so familiar from the numerous researches into carnival in early modern cultural history. It seems plausible that the popular mocking formed an indispensable element of the sacred rituals, helping to release the tension produced by the collective contact

with the supernatural. A Polish historian has recently demonstrated how the position of jester at the early modern court of the Polish kings was declining proportionally with the decline of sacral character of the monarchy. Did the decline of *sacrum* and of grotesque go hand in hand?⁷ If so, then *a contrario*: the persistence of the grotesque indicates the persistence of the *sacrum*. If the editors of a semi-official publication on the 1867 coronation deemed it instructive to include the satirical engravings, then the sacred character of the monarchy must have had some resonance. The rationalist interpretation presented by Max Falk tells only part of the story.

This connection of sacred and grotesque leads us to our next point: speaking about “traditional” elements in the 19th century images of power may mean (at least) two different things. First, it may mean the political ideas that were invented at some time in the past and are slowly beginning to be perceived by some people as somehow outdated. Second, it may mean certain images are less “obsolete” than “eternal;” whether eternal in European culture or eternal in the human psyche is of secondary importance. Whoever is fond of pretentious words, may speak about “archetypes.” Not being an anthropologist, I recognized the dangers of this slippery slope. There are, however, some phenomena that seem incapable of any other interpretation. Take the easiest example, royal travels. The archetypal figure of *princeps ambulans* seems to linger through the imperial travels of Francis Joseph. The mediaevalists long ago recognized the importance of reconstructing royal itineraries. The specialists of the 19th century, alas, are much behind (although the task, due to the existence of the press reports, would be much easier) and no 19th century ruler can boast of a reconstruction of his itinerary as can most mediaeval kings or emperors. Even so, some conclusions are evident. In 1852 Francis Joseph visited Galicia and Bukovina. The contemporary description of this journey presents the Bukovinian capital Czernowitz as a trembling bride awaiting the groom, unsure whether she will appear attractive to him.⁸

Now, this is an obvious allusion to the Revelation of St John (21,2), who, in turn, alludes to the Song of Songs. Christ enters the Eternal Jerusalem like the groom visiting the bride, and the Monarch, the Anointed (and in this sense a figure of Christ), enters His faithful city. The triumphal entries of the monarchs into capitals in the Middle Ages and early modern period were staged in the form of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The late echo of these ideas can be seen here: for one moment Czernowitz became the Eternal Jerusalem welcoming her Lord. This may be, perhaps, a simple matter of residual phraseology: however, examples of this sort abound. The ultra-hagiographic, seven hundred page long description of imperial journey to Trieste, Dalmatia and Italy stresses the Emperor’s sufferings so much that one cannot help thinking of the christological concept of the monarch again—this time the monarch suffering for his people. Everybody, we may add, suffers in his own way, if by nothing

else, then by taking a night railway journey to Trieste.⁹ The royal presence brings happiness—*Beglueckend* is the most often used adjective. The monarch is also a Sower—i.e., a giver of life:

*Dem Saeman gleich durchzog Er unsre Laende
Und streute Voelkerglueck in fuelle aus,
Beglueckend schritt Er hin am Isterstraende,
Der Theiss entland zum fernsten Grenzerhaus.*¹⁰

The Monarch is also a Builder.¹¹ “Nature itself” changes its appearance and “throws away its winter garment” at his presence.¹² The very word of the monarch has creative force. Thus, after the Tisza overflowed and severely damaged Szeged, the King said, “Szeged will be more beautiful than it was”—and so it happened (the reminder of Christ resurrecting Lazarus may not be out of place) due to “the power of the King’s word.”¹³ The epoch of Francis Joseph is that of peace and opulence. The language used is sometimes very close to the idea of the “end times:” the glorious *finale* of history, the millenary kingdom of peace and justice. (25 years ago this was a promise, and now it has been fulfilled—announced a Unitarian preacher in Hungary on the 25th anniversary of the Hungarian coronation.¹⁴) Quite often, the chiliastic overtones coincide perfectly with the liberal–progressivist enthusiasm. Again “modern” and “traditional” are not to be disentangled. The quoted journey to Dalmatia reads in part as the electoral journey of a politician—e.g. as when Francis Joseph visits the Slovenian school yard and puts his name in Slovenian form in the guests book.¹⁵

There is no need to stress that the monarch is a war hero, a hunter not afraid of the strongest bear and the protector of arts (thus re-acting the glorious traditions of his august dynasty, starting with Charles V giving the brush to Titian. This scene is immortalized in the inner side of the dome, in the Court Museum of Art History in Vienna). Thanks to this last capacity, his court can easily stand the comparison with the Medici court of Renaissance Florence.¹⁶ All these *topoi* belong to the traditional armory of monarchic laudations in Europe.

Let us stop here. It is high time to ask, so what? A tentative answer could be that perhaps the modes of legitimizing the political power did not change much in the 19th century as compared with the former epochs. The new elements, aspects and interpretations exist, true—but the whole structure seems to survive. Clifford Geertz in an interesting essay has tried to compare the official travels of various rulers, starting with mediaeval Java, to Elisabeth I of England and the early 20th century pilgrimage of the sultan of Morocco. He added a lengthy postscript, comparing the above instances with the travels of presidential candidate during the electoral campaign in present-day America, and concluded by stressing the attempt to bestow political power with a semi-sacral air as a characteristic feature of

both “traditional” and “modern” politics.¹⁷ The 19th century, so often seen as an age of total revolution appears then as an age of evolutionary continuation. This does not mean that there were no important changes. A momentous difference when compared with the former epochs is a relatively diminished stress on the monarch’s piety and religiosity. The sacral and supernatural character of power is—as I tried to argue—still felt and accepted but perhaps rarely expressed in a clear way.

The personal piety of the monarch is duly stressed in popular publications, but—a characteristic change—it is included under a heading of the Emperor’s private life and tempered by an immediate reminder that the Emperor, personally an exemplary Roman Catholic, takes care to ensure the full religious tolerance in his realms.¹⁸ If we remember how the *Pietas Austriaca* was an important element of the Habsburgs self-image, then we can clearly see how enlightened absolutism and Josephinism was an important watershed whose ideological consequences were clearly seen till the end of the Habsburg rule. If we compare two paintings representing the Habsburgs praying—Titian’s Charles V adoring the Holy Trinity and a small water color representing Francis Joseph as a little child praying with his mother and brothers¹⁹ then we cannot fail to see the difference between the public role of religion in the 16th and its privatization in the 19th century. Some might long for the old times. On the occasion of the imperial visit, the Jesuits in Krakow prepared a banner representing Rudolph I, the founder of the Habsburg power, giving his horse to the priest with the Eucharist. The emperor himself may have been personally in favor of the traditional role of religion in legitimizing his dynasty. After all, he knew well that it was precisely the pious deed of Rudolph that was rewarded by the Divine Providence by giving Austria world dominion.²⁰ No wonder, that when meeting a priest with the Eucharist at the Viennese Ring he hastened to emulate the piety of his great ancestor.²¹ This episode, however, did not become a *leitmotif* of the state propaganda and monarchic piety remained hidden within the private sphere. This is perhaps the most telling difference. Another important innovation was growth of accessibility. Traditionally, the monarchic majesty was inaccessible and distanced. The “modern” monarchy (as Peter Burke has shown in his study on Louis XIV) becomes more and more accessible and Francis Joseph has construed out of his willingness to grant audiences one of the main elements of his popular image, without giving up the awe inspiring distance. In this sense he can be placed between the traditional “distance keeping” rulers and modern “accessible” politicians.

There is yet another objection against the “continuity thesis” as regards the 19th century ideas on justifying power. One could claim that the Habsburg monarchy is not a good example, as it cannot use the most fashionable legitimizing device—the national idea. It could be considered (or at least its Austrian part) an “empire par excellence,” not able to identify with

any of its peoples. Were it really so, then we would be entitled to answer the first question posed in the present essay and to an important peculiarity in the imperial way of justifying power. This was my original supposition when I started to inquire into the present topic. It soon became apparent however, that the difference does not seem so great as might have been expected. Whether we look at imperial Germany, undoubtedly a font of modern German nationalism (and an example for various nationalist movements of Central and Eastern Europe to follow), at the tsarist Russia, at the republican France or at Britain, we may notice, much to our astonishment, that the “nationalist” argument is far from being obvious. Indeed, contrary to the supposition, the imagery of power in the Habsburg monarchy does not display so many important differences with other countries of contemporary Europe. Everywhere (with the obvious exception of republican France) the dynastic element plays an essential role; everywhere (including France, this time) the militarization of patriotism is as essential. Numerous historians have quoted the famous phrase from Grillparzer’s poem to Radetzky (*in Deinem Lager ist Oesterreich*) to prove the weakness of the Austrian state and its unique position, with the army as the main factor of preserving the monarchy’s cohesion. It appears, however, that in Germany the army as a factor of patriotic education was stressed much more than in Austria. (A youth learning German as a foreign language could read that “Being an officer in active service is considered the most honorable profession in Germany.”)²²

Everywhere, moreover, the “nationalist” legitimization is used only half-heartedly and with reservations. The reason is simple. The legitimizing ideology cannot be too consistent; it has to appeal to people and groups that differ socially, intellectually, ethnically etc. Radical ideological nationalism, as it developed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, aimed at being an all-embracing ideology and tended to put “nation” over any other value. No wonder that it was considered potentially destructive and looked upon with distrust by the established governments, however “patriotic” or “national” they considered themselves. Dynasty and the person of the ruler, if less able to generate strong emotions, were still obviously safer for the politicians than ethnic nationalism. “The patriotic feeling and the love of the Ruling Family acquire a visible form at the birthday of H. M. the German Emperor”—states the same handbook of German language and culture from the early 20th century.²³ It is interesting to look how in 1902 William II, after giving one of his most “German-national” speeches at the former capital of Teutonic Knights in Marienburg (Malbork), immediately tries to “outdo” it by stressing in his speech in Posen (Poznań) that “the kingdom of Prussia is composed (*setzt sich zusammen*) of numerous tribes who are proud of their history and their specific features (*Eigenart*), which, however, does not hinder them from being good Prussians. Traditions and memories can last unchanged, but they belong to history, in the past.”²⁴

(“Prussian-ness,” as opposed to “German-ness” was considered as being of political, not ethnic, character). Remote as he was from any form of the Habsburg style of the “equality of nationalities,” he deemed it useful to assert his distance from radical forms of nationalism.

The reserve of the Imperial German governments towards the radical German nationalist *irredenta* within the Habsburg monarchy is probably the best example. Berlin could not afford the weakening of the only important ally in Europe for the sake of a group of radicals. It displayed similar restraint in its attitudes towards the Germans in the Russian Empire. An important aspect of its cautiousness was the unresolved dualism of Russian–German within the Hohenzollern Empire, so brilliantly analyzed by Meinecke in his *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*. The dynasty felt it was more Prussian than German and the gap between loyalty to the united Germany and to Prussia or other German states was never finally bridged. Even the militarization of patriotism, mentioned above, served to stress this gap; technically, there was no imperial German army but only armies of the different German states. It was only in 1897 that William II ordered his troops to wear an imperial insignia together with (not instead of) one of their own country.²⁵

Analogous phenomena appeared in Britain and in Russia. The British Empire with its idea of “indirect rule” was as remote from the nation-state as was the Habsburg monarchy, and even within Great Britain itself the “national” basis of the state was far from certain. Was it the “English” or the “British” nation?²⁶ The problems of the Russian Empire with self-definition and its dubious relations with the Russian national idea were convincingly presented by Andreas Kappeler in his *Russland als Vielvoelkerstaat*.

It seems, then, that no fundamental difference can be found between “empires” and “nation states” as regards the modes of legitimizing the political power. Indeed, the very division between the two may not seem very helpful, at least with regard to 19th century Europe. The mixture (or fusion) of “imperial” and “national” legitimization is as difficult to untangle as the mixture (or fusion) of “modern” and “traditional” legitimizing ideas. Consequently, the Habsburg Monarchy, at least from the point of view that interests us in the present essay, was relatively close to other European states.

One important legitimizing idea is especially worth stressing here, as its importance for the 19th century intellectual history has often been neglected; it is the Roman imperial idea. Since the division of the Empire between East and West (AD 395) it never ceased to haunt human imagination and numerous rulers were ready to accept the loss of much of the “real” gains only in order to be able to prove their ideological pedigree leading to ancient Rome. The Carolingian renovation (800) opened the way to various heirs of Rome and the Ottonian renovation (10th century) gave birth to the Holy Roman Empire, which only collapsed in 1806. We may say that in European cultural tradition any empire must be a Roman Empire in one

sense or another. All the devices to represent the imperial glory in arts or in literature or even in political thought must, in the last resort, lead to Rome as their ultimate source (or even earlier, as Rome, as we know, was considered the fourth universal empire—but this need not concern us here). This Roman heritage is clearly seen through the 19th century and it enters into numerous forms of co-existence with various other legitimizing ideas. This co-existence, that cannot be analyzed here, is another example of the “hybrid” forms of legitimization that form the main subject of this essay.

Legitimization of political power is sometimes seen as conflict between divine right of kings and popular sovereignty. True, there were situations, when the two paradigms openly conflicted. Thus, in 1849 the Austrian parliament at Kremsier (Kromeriz) inserted the principle of popular sovereignty into the projected Austrian constitution and the Czech liberal Frantisek Ladislav Rieger defended it in a spirited oration. This gave rise to conflict with the dynasty and resulted in dissolving parliament. It was more often true, however, that both principles entered into a sort of co-habitation. It is interesting how the monumental synthesis of German pre-1848 liberalism, the famous *Staatslexicon* of Rotteck & Welcker, interpreted the principle of the divine right of kings in such a way as to make it compatible with the idea of constitutional monarchy.²⁷ In a similar vein, a Galician politician argued some 40 years later that it is only in theory that we can divide political systems into those relying on popular sovereignty and those relying on the divine right of kings. In reality, politics mix both these principles. Incidentally, it is worth noting that the idea of popular sovereignty is not at all recent.²⁸ The struggle between both principles is by no means—as some thinkers, e.g. Thomas Masaryk, were prone to suppose—a struggle of “traditional” theocratic monarchism and “modern” democracy.

Conclusions can be given here in the form of a few tentative propositions and questions devoid of answers:

1. Various modes of legitimization tend to enter into combinations and produce “hybrid” forms rather than to compete one with another. The effects are various sorts of mutual symbiosis, producing arguments that are not necessarily internally incoherent. The 19th century witnesses numerous changes of the modes of legitimization but no fundamental revolution.

2. Therefore, neither the “imperial” model of legitimization (stressing diversity and multi-ethnicity as assets) nor the nationalist one is ever encountered in a pure form. The same is true regarding the models of “divine grace” and “popular sovereignty.” An intellectually consistent system of legitimizing ideas, had it ever existed, would probably be counter-productive as it narrows the range of those to whom it could potentially appeal.

3. Historians, due to their profession, naturally tend to stress the development of things. Even if we would hardly find a historian today, who would call him/herself an evolutionist, an essential evolutionist element is encoded in most of the “developmental” approaches. Historians tend to treat such

phenomena as the 19th century monarchy as “residua” of former epochs and explain their role by the “persistence of the old regime” (to use the title of a well-known book by Arno Mayer). It would be desirable, if only to restore the equilibrium, to sometimes adopt the functionalist attitude, to accept (if only as a methodological postulate) Bronisław Malinowski’s claim that there are no residua. The task of the researcher is to explain a phenomenon by highlighting its role within contemporary society or culture and not by referring to its genesis and history. In other words, the 19th century coronation is not (or “not only”) a remnant of the monarchic ceremonies of the earlier epochs but a separate phenomenon in its own right that should be understood in terms of one of the elements of 19th century culture. We should refrain from claiming that the “true” meaning of medieval ceremonies was misunderstood (in the same way, as we should not consider mediaeval Latin “corrupt”). The meaning has changed but it remains as “true” within the context of the 19th century as it was within the context of the medieval one.

4. Legitimizing activities are addressed to the ruling elite no less than to the population at large. Power, in order to be efficient, must be first of all convinced of its own legitimate character. All legitimization is, to a high degree, self-legitimization. Therefore, whenever we encounter the argumentation that seems to be too naive and traditional to be able to convince anybody, we should not consider it too hastily as mere propaganda; the person to be persuaded may have been the author himself.

5. The problem of the specific nature of imperial legitimization, addressed above, could give rise to an even broader question that transgresses the limits of the present subject. Are the modes of justification of the ruling power (no matter, whether of a “nation state” or of an “empire”) different from the modes of justification of any other political program? In other words, do we deal here with the justification of state’s legitimacy or with the justification of political and social ideas at large? Originally my intuition was that justifying the state government is something basically different from justifying the national irredenta or the social revolution; now I tend to think that the analogies are more important than differences. The ways of justifying, say, the rights of the Polish nation were not so different from the ways of justifying the Habsburg Dynasty, and the celebrations of the anniversary of an anti-establishment National Hero do not seem to differ much from the state-official Imperial Jubilee.

Any conclusive answer for any of the above points, however, would demand much more thinking and research; the problem may be only signaled here.

NOTES

- 1 I am grateful to Dr Marek Gensler for the comments to the first draft of this paper.
- 2 I follow the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* here: "Legitimität—die Rechtfertigung staatlicher Machtentfaltung durch allgemeinverbindliche Prinzipien, Th. Württenberger, Legitimität, Legalität," in O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1982), 677.
- 3 On the 19th century ideas about the tasks of the state in the realm of culture cf. an excellent essay by U. Scheuer, "Die Kunst als Staatsaufgabe im 19. Jahrhundert" in E. Mai, S. Waetzold, ed., *Kunstverwaltung, Bau- und denkmal-Politik in Kaiserreich* (Berlin: Mann, 1981), 13–46 (the book forms the first volume of an interesting series "Kunst, Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich").
- 4 L. Sofer, *Franz Joseph I. Patriotisches Liederspiel* (Eisenstadt, 1899), 9.
- 5 *Die Rundreise Sr. K.k. apost. Majestaet Franz Joseph des Ersten durch Ungarn und Siebenbuergen im Jahre 1852. Als ein Beitrag zur Geschichte unserer Tage mitgetheilt von einem Augenzeugen* (Wien, 1852), 123ff.
- 6 M. Falk, "Die Krönung des Königs von Ungarn," in M. Falk, A. Dux, *Krönungs-Album. 8 Juni 1867. Mit 20 Illustrationen... nach der Natur aufgenommen* (Pest, 1867), 1–29.
- 7 M. Wilska, *Błazen na dworze Jagiellonów* (Warszawa: Neriton, 1998), 220–228.
- 8 [A. Tessarczyk], 1851 (d. 11 października). *Wjazd Najjaśniejszego Franciszka Józefa I Cesarza Austrii do Krakowa tudzież podróż J.Ces .Król. Apost. Mości po Galicji i Bukowinie* (Kraków, 1853), 69.
- 9 F. Coglievina, *Allerhoechste Reise Seiner kais. und koen. Apostol. Majestät Franz Josef Kaiser von Österreich, König von Ungarn etc. etc. durch Triest, Görz, nach Wenedig, Istrien, Dalmatien und Fiume in den Monaten April und Mai 1875 beschrieben und zusammengestellt von Dr..., k.k. Universitäts-Professor. Als Manuscript gedruckt* (Wien: Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1875).
- 10 "Pressburger Zeitung", as quoted in *Die Rundreise*, *op. cit.*, 170. For the various uses of *beglückend* cf. e.g.: *ibid.*, 8; J.A. Landsberg, *Die Regententugend, gehalten bei der aus Anlass der allerhöchsten Majestäten-Anwesenheit veranstalteten Andachtsfeier im israelitischen Tempel von..., Lokal- und Suedbiharer Kreisrabiner, Grosswardein, den 27 Mai 1857* (Grosswardein 1857), 9 ("die beglückende Rundreise"); Coglievina, *op. cit.*, 1 ("Alles thut [...] um sein Reich zu beglücken"); as well as the title of the work mentioned in the next footnote.
- 11 E. R. S. von Trenberg, *Der Baumeister. Dramatisches Festgedicht aus Anlass der beglückenden Anwesenheit des allerhöchsten Kaiserpaares I.I.M.M. Franz Joseph I und Elisabeth in Ungarn* (Pest, 1857).
- 12 F. Coglievina, *op. cit.*, 3.
- 13 K. Mikszáth, *A szegedi árvíz és a királyi szó hatalma*, in: *A koronázás örömnépe. A Magyar nép és az ifjuság számára* (Budapest, [1892]), 12–15.
- 14 K. Derzsi, *Hála-ima I Ferencz József Király és Erzsébet királyné ö felségeik megkoronáztatásának 25-ik évfordulója alkalmából Buda pesten, 1892 évi június hó 8-an* (Budapest, 1892), 7.
- 15 F. Coglievina, *op. cit.*, 298.
- 16 *Unser Kaiser als Mensch* (Kaiser-Büchlein, No 9) (Vienna, n. d.), 38 (*Kaiser-Büchlein*, No 7).
- 17 Cl. Geertz, "Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power", in: *idem, Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology* (n. pl., Basic Books, 1983), 120–146.

- 18 *Unser Kaiser als Mensch*.
- 19 The first of the two is well known and to be found in any handbook of Renaissance art history; the second is *Das Abendgebet* by Peter Fendi (1839), reproduced in K. Sottriffer, *Kunstwerke Österreichs* (Gütersloh: Prisma Verlag GmbH, 1987), 158–159, 171, ill. 99.
- 20 Cf. A. Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca. Ursprung und Entwicklung barocker Frömmigkeit in Österreich* (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1959), 19–20 and passim.
- 21 *Unser Kaiser als Mensch*, 40–41.
- 22 R. Kron, *Der kleine Deutsche. Ein Fortbildungsmittel zur Erlernung der deutschen Umgangssprache auf allen Gebieten des täglichen Lebens, mit steter Bezugnahme auf deutsche Eigenart in Sitten, Gewohnheiten, und Einrichtungen*, 8th edition (Paris–Berlin, n. d.), 106. To compare the role of military education in the Habsburg and Hohenzollern dynasties cf. J. Meyer, *Kaiser Wilhelm II. Für die deutsche Jugend erzählt...*, 15th edition (Langensaltza, 1889), 19 and passim; *Unser Kaiser als Held* (Kaiserbüchlein, 4) (Vienna, n. d.) and passim.
- 23 R. Kron, *op. cit.*, 115.
- 24 Cf. F. Rachfahl, *Kaiser und Reich 1888–1913. 25 Jahre preussisch-deutscher Geschichte. Festschrift zum 25 jährigen Jubiläum Wilhelms II, deutschen Kaisers, Königs von Preussen* (Berlin 1913), 265.
- 25 Th. Schieder, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat*, 2nd edition (Goettingen 1992), 83.
- 26 Cf. D. McCrove, “Unmasking Britannia: the Rise and Fall of British National Identity,” *Nations and Nationalism* 3 (1997): 579–596; R. Langlands, “Britishness or Englishness? The Historical Problem of National Identity in Britain,” *Nations and Nationalism* 5 (1999): 53–69.
- 27 [C. von] Rotteck, *Dei Gratia*, in C. von Rotteck, C. Welcker, eds., *Staatslexicon*, vol. IV (Altona, 1837), 223–225.
- 28 Cf. O. Gierke, *Political theories of the Middle Age*, transl. F. Maitland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 37–67.

Schism Once Removed: Sects, State Authority, and Meanings of Religious Toleration in Imperial Russia

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If Orthodoxy occupied an explicitly privileged place as the “preeminent and predominant” faith of the Russian Empire, the imperial state nonetheless forged important ties of co-operation with other confessions and its representatives. Indeed, the American historian Robert Crews has argued recently that the state in Russia served as a patron of recognized confessions, “committed to backing the construction and implementation of ‘orthodoxy’ within each recognized religious community.” By assuming this obligation, “the state became deeply enmeshed in intraconfessional disputes as the guardian of religious ‘orthodoxy’ for the tolerated faiths” in Russia. In this respect, imperial Russia represented a “confessional state,” for which connections with clergies and pious activists offered not only a basis for deepening its regulatory and disciplinary reach into non-Orthodox communities, but also a source of cohesion for a large and diverse realm.²

Crews astutely identifies the confessional foundations of the imperial Russian state, which indeed conditioned many of the state’s interactions with its subjects. Moreover, by elucidating patterns of interdependence and mutual penetration between religious communities and the state, he provides a crucial corrective to a simplistic nationalist historiography that portrays the state as intrinsically hostile to the so-called “foreign confessions”³ and construes non-Orthodox religiosity as a refuge from the government’s intrusion. My goal in the present essay is nonetheless to propose that in practice the state’s attitude towards the ‘orthodoxy’ of foreign confessions was more ambivalent than Crews’ account allows, especially when we move beyond the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55). Undoubtedly, the state sometimes deployed police power for the purposes of suppressing dissidence within recognized non-Orthodox religions and in general regarded new religious teachings and “sects” with a healthy dose of suspicion. Likewise, the state’s laws made no provision for the recognition and institutionalization of new confessions and sects.⁴ Yet, when it came to the question of whether it was the state’s job to guarantee the purity of non-Orthodox religions and to protect them from “schism,” the government often answered in the negative and in its actions exhibited uncertainty and inconsistency.

This article seeks to assess the state's commitment to the foreign confessions by analyzing its actions and statements when "schism" and "sects" threatened those confessions with division and fragmentation.⁵ Such situations confronted the government with serious dilemmas in light of its self-proclaimed adherence to "religious toleration" (*veroterpimost*), a principle that could be applied either to entire confessions and religions, as Crews' account suggests, or to individual believers, which implied considerable deference to their religious convictions. The cases considered below accordingly reflect the state's effort to balance these alternative visions of toleration, rather than its being committed unequivocally to one of them. In regulating cases of "schism" and "sects," the state also faced important political dilemmas, deriving from the perceived relationship of the confession in question to Russia's interests both at home and abroad, as well as practical ones, deriving from the fact that it was almost in all cases religious figures who maintained the empire's most basic civil records. On the whole, while determined to uphold the legally defined rights of non-Orthodox confessions, the state nonetheless proved willing to provide administrative regulation and legal recognition for a number of dissident religious groups in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

THE FOREIGN CONFESSIONS AS STATE INSTITUTIONS

Even before they were explicitly characterized as "foreign" in 1810,⁶ non-Orthodox religious institutions were being integrated into the empire's system of state administration. From roughly 1770 to 1840 the state imposed on foreign confessions most of the obligations, rights, and institutional structures that it had already imposed on Orthodoxy. Thus, just as Orthodoxy received its "Spiritual Regulation" in 1721, so Roman Catholicism received a comparable statute in 1769, as did the Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Churches in 1832, and most of the other recognized confessions later in the 1830s.⁷ These statutes and related decrees typically established a collegial body akin to Orthodoxy's Holy Synod—for example, the Evangelical-Lutheran General Consistory, although the state also recognized or established singular heads for most of the same confessions—Muftii, Catholicos, Gakham, etc.⁸ The application of the system of Orthodox regulation to the foreign confessions also entailed the creation of "clergies" for the non-Christian religions, or at least the elevation of figures like mullahs, rabbis, and lamas to the rough status of clergies. Just as the Orthodox clergy had been required from 1724 to maintain metrical books registering births, marriages and deaths in their parishes, so this obligation was extended to local representatives of most other confessions in the nineteenth century. All of the statutes—Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike—were enacted by the authority of the Emperor, even as representatives of these religions were sometimes intimately involved in producing them. Designed to promote religion

among the empire's population, the purpose of these statutes was nonetheless primarily secular: to regulate the affairs of each confession by defining its rights and obligations and incorporating it into the state apparatus.⁹

The creation of these statutes was also motivated by the state's desire to strengthen officially sanctioned forms of religion and spiritual leaders, thereby preventing the emergence of unauthorized popular forms of religiosity.¹⁰ In the case of Protestantism, the state undertook the work of codifying that confession in part with the goal of combating various disorders in Protestant religious life arising from the appearance and spread of Pietists, Hershutters, and similar religious sects. Admiral A. S. Shishkov, then head of the Administration of the Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions, contended in 1826 that "only true Lutheran rules and institutions" were in a position to curb the chaos. Responding to the requests of Lutheran clerics to give the Evangelical Church a more solid foundation, Nicholas I authorized the collection of past church directives in order to identify the original essence of Lutheranism and to eliminate various deviations that had appeared over the course of the eighteenth century.¹¹ According to the lay chairman of the Evangelical-Lutheran General Consistory, Count Paul Tiesenhausen, Lutherans themselves understood the statute, published in 1832, to represent "a guarantee for the preservation in the future of their ancestors' religion in all its purity and inviolability." They also expected that the statute would put an end to further "schism" within the "Protestant confession."¹²

In general, the state tended to regard confessional affiliation as something stable and hereditary, with specific non-Orthodox faiths being organically linked to particular ethnic communities. The law code of 1832 clearly stated that "[A]ll peoples that inhabit Russia praise God Almighty in various languages in accordance with the law and confession of their forefathers."¹³ The state explicitly regarded Gregorianism as Armenians' "national religion" and considered it natural that Armenian Catholics, as "apostate offspring of that ancient church," should return to that faith.¹⁴ In 1907, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) described the essence of the state's past confessional policy as an attempt "to bind new ethnic groups to the structure of the immense Empire and seize their national religions into the framework of the state administration. This was a kind of transfer of various national religions into the pantheon of Russian state religions."¹⁵ The state of course welcomed the conversion of non-Orthodox subjects to Orthodoxy, and even permitted conversions from one foreign faith to another within certain parameters. But it was otherwise considered reasonable and desirable that people would continue to confess the faith of their ancestors. Imperial law and the existing system of confessional administration were thus designed to regulate a fundamentally *static* religious terrain.

In general, then, the "state" character of the recognized non-Orthodox confessions, together with the prevailing view of religion as an ethnic and

hereditary characteristic, combined to create a certain resistance among state officials to the prospect of “schism” among the foreign confessions. As we shall see, however, this aversion to “schism” did not preclude accommodation with religious dissent where and when it actually appeared.

ACTUAL EXISTING “SCHISM”: SOME EXAMPLES

The Hernhutters, a Pietist group that appeared in the Baltic region from German lands in the eighteenth century, represented one of the earliest cases of “schism” within Lutheranism. In 1743, due in part to the perception that the sect’s teaching was disrupting relations between peasants and lords, Empress Elizabeth ordered the expulsion of Hernhutters who had come from abroad and the suppression of all Hernhutter activities among the inhabitants of Livland.¹⁶ Hernhutters fared better under Alexander I, who was gripped by mysticism after 1812 and even declared, according to one account, that the Hernhutters came closer than any other confession to the original teaching of Christ. The group accordingly received extensive privileges and freedoms in the Baltic region in 1817.¹⁷ By the end of Alexander’s reign, however, when mystical influences were in decline and Hernhutters began to draw more adherents from rank-and-file Lutherans, officials began to worry that the entire peasantry, deeply disadvantaged by the terms of their emancipation in 1816–19, would join the group primarily in order to gain financial privileges. A state decree in 1824 noted that the number of Hernhutters in the Baltic provinces was rapidly growing and that this phenomenon “represents a kind of schism from the Protestant confession.”¹⁸ Having permitted and even encouraged the Hernhutters to take root at the height of Alexander’s mysticism, the imperial government now had to decide how to regulate their relationship to the official Lutheran Church.

There was considerable uncertainty as to whether the Hernhutters represented a Protestant “sect” and whether their spread constituted “schism” within the Lutheran Church. Consistory chairman Tiesenhausen argued in 1833 that the rapid spread of “sectarianism” in Estland “portends a complete schism in the Church with various disruptive consequences for the government,” while the presence of mystics in the school administration and especially in Dorpat University—the only institution in the empire that trained Protestant pastors—was generating sectarian tendencies among the youth and new clergy.¹⁹ As “a member of the pure Lutheran confession,” Tiesenhausen found it unseemly that the Hernhutters, “merely a *sect*” broken off from Lutheranism, “enjoy more privileges and trust from the government than does the clergy of the Lutheran Church.” Riga Military Governor Karl Magnus von der Pahlen concurred that the Hernhutters had produced “a schism within [the Evangelical] church: for a religious union that adopts a distinct name, has separate houses of worship, stands under

the authority of unknown foreign leaders, and attributes to itself the task of the deepest investigation into the essence of religion and a better comprehension of the Word of God than other Christian congregations, can scarcely be ascribed at the same time to the Evangelical–Lutheran Church.” Based on the Emperor’s injunction “not to oppress the Hernhutter sect, but for all that not to facilitate its spread or to allow the establishment of new houses of worship,” the government developed a set of rules in 1834 establishing greater oversight over the group, though without actually prohibiting its exercise of religion.²⁰

Yet if Tiesenhausen and Pahlen saw a troublesome “sect” and the specter of “schism,” others took a different view. A number of landlords in Livland petitioned for ending the limitations contained in the rules of 1834, contending that the Hernhutters had exercised a beneficial influence on the peasantry’s morality. In 1836 the Ösel Lutheran Provincial Consistory supported the establishment of a new Hernhutter house of prayer, presuming that this would aid in the spiritual salvation of the local parishioners.²¹ As the state intervened more in the affairs of the church in the 1830s and 1840s, Lutherans began to downplay the presence of sects. When in 1843 the government proposed replacing the department of theology at Dorpat University with a separate “Evangelical Spiritual Academy” as a way of countering Hernhutters and Pietists,²² Lutherans began to assert that their church was not really beset by sects at all. The marshal of the Livland nobility, A. Tagemeister, contended that “the so-called Pietists” and especially the Hernhutters “in no way constitute a particular sect, but on the contrary adhere with fellow-believing Lutherans to one and the same Church.” The government commission established to consider the issue of a Protestant academy agreed that “there is no schism in the teachings of the Protestant Church in the Ostzee provinces,” and accordingly decided to leave the department of theology in place and to improve the church’s condition by other means.²³

Though apparently attracted to Hernhutter teachings partly for spiritual reasons, Baltic peasants seem also to have seen in the movement the possibility of fulfilling certain material needs and perhaps even a means of protest against German economic and social domination. Having attained personal freedom from serfdom in 1819, peasants in Livland had simultaneously lost the hereditary right to use of the land and were in some respects even more dependent now on German landlords.²⁴ Some peasants apparently joined the Hernhutters in order to gain material privileges (such as freedom from taxes) that had been granted in 1817 to the original Hernhutter settlers from abroad. A series of poor harvests beginning in the late 1830s had rendered peasants’ condition dire, while Lutheran attempts to restrict the Hernhutters had complicated their existence. In this context, large numbers of Latvian and Estonian peasants began to seek conversion to Orthodoxy in the desperate hope that confessing the “Tsar’s faith” might

improve their economic condition and mitigate the effects of German domination. Initially convinced by Baltic Germans that the local Orthodox clergy were inciting the disorders with promises of material benefits, Nicholas soon came to implicate the faulty character of the agrarian reform of 1819 for the movement. Moreover, according to Minister of Education Sergei Uvarov, the Lutheran elite had realized “that hampering and constraining the Pietists (Hernhutters) would strengthen the people’s striving towards Orthodoxy.” It was for this reason, to extend Uvarov’s logic that those elites had begun to claim that Hernhutters were an essentially beneficial force exhibiting only a few “insignificant” differences with the official church.²⁵

With the transformation of the Hernhutter movement into an Orthodox one, the situation became fundamentally different. Protecting Lutheranism from “sectarianism” was one thing; blocking conversion to the “predominant” faith was quite another. True, the state *did* initially seek to impede the movement toward Orthodoxy—the Holy Synod actually prohibited the conversion of Livland peasants in 1841—just as the imperial government closed ranks with the Baltic elite when revolutionary crisis struck Europe in 1848. But in the meantime Nicholas developed serious doubts about the appropriateness of protecting Lutheranism. “Who knows,” he wrote to Uvarov in 1843, “perhaps inscrutable Providence is invisibly guiding that church towards destruction, *and then no power will be able to stop the people’s aspirations for Orthodoxy.*”²⁶ Between 1845 and 1848 some 110,000 Latvian and Estonian peasants converted officially to Orthodoxy. Followers of the Hernhutters were notably among the first to request conversion, and the “sect” seems to have dissipated in those areas where they indeed joined the “predominant” church.²⁷ As evidenced already in their arguments that the Hernhutters did not, after all, represent a sect, Lutheran authorities now became much more lenient in their attitude towards dissent in the ranks of their parishioners. Because conversion to Orthodoxy was legally irreversible (as many of the Baltic converts learned subsequently), it was better for Lutherans to permit the formation of sects and splinter groups and even—as one account suggested—to promote the spread of some sects, as long as they were clearly Protestant in their orientation and would thus keep parishioners away from Orthodoxy.²⁸ Accordingly, a plethora of sects appeared in the Baltic region in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁹ Although most were very small, sometimes involving merely a few hundred adherents, one group—the Baptists—enjoyed greater success, drawing many thousands of followers and eventually gaining full legal recognition from the state.

There is little indication that the government was concerned with upholding Lutheran “orthodoxy” as the Baptists appeared. Although the Governor-General of Kiev concluded in 1865 that the Baptists’ teaching represented “schism” from the Lutheran Church, and that their proselytism and even “fanaticism” were generating discord with neighboring Lutherans, he

also underscored their obedience to authorities and their admirable morality and sobriety. When local authorities arrested several persons after Baptist teachings appeared from beyond the Prussian border in Courland, Baltic Governor-General P. A. Shuvalov concluded that such arrests amounted to “persecution,” which in the case of “apostasy” from Lutheranism “are not justified by any state interest.” Asserting that forceful measures “cannot be permitted in matters of religion,” Shuvalov argued that the administration’s offhanded attitude towards arrest “is one of the most harmful evils that can take root in a locale, since as a direct consequence people living in that locale do not enjoy the protection of the law as concerns the right of personal freedom.”³⁰

Curiously, Lutheran authorities emerged as proponents of the Baptists’ legalization. Partly, no doubt, they sought to ensure that restrictions on Baptists not generate another mass transfer to Orthodoxy. But they also recognized a central truth in Russia’s system of confessional administration: state recognition (and thus toleration) came at the expense of state supervision and regulation. That Baptists consisted of lower-class elements preaching equality in a highly stratified society was undoubtedly objectionable; but most frustrating to the Lutheran clergy was the fact that as long as there were no rules governing their affairs, Baptists were more or less free to do as they wished. Thus the General Consistory stated that if the Baptists “are granted the freedom to practice their confession in the Russian Empire, [they should be] subject to the same laws as are other religious groups that are tolerated in our fatherland.”³¹ In short, all other faiths in the empire had to play by certain rules, and Lutherans saw no reason why the Baptists should be an exception.

The Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions agreed that the Baptists’ status—in particular their relation to the Lutheran Church—required more precise definition, in order both to prevent them from acting illegally and to eliminate “all constraints of conscience and persecution of the sectarians in a religious sense.” Governor-General Shuvalov, however, opposed any regulation that would treat the Lutheran Church and the Baptists in the same way that the law treated the Orthodox Church and its *own* “schism.” This was not Prussia, Shuvalov argued, “where the Lutheran Church, as the predominant [church], naturally desires the destruction of the Baptist sect.” Shuvalov argued, on the contrary, that “the spread of Baptists who recognize the civil authorities in no way contradicts the state interests of the empire.” He therefore opposed measures that might “offend” the Baptists unnecessarily or establish conditions that would be “constraining for those wishing to leave their previous confession.”³² The MVD’s initial draft rules for the Baptists in 1864 indeed proposed making it relatively easy for would-be converts to quit their Lutheran parishes, since delays were thought likely to increase levels of religious conflict at the local level.

By 1868, however, the Minister of Internal Affairs questioned that the state should make it a point of facilitating such conversion: “[B]ecause the spread of the Baptist sect is not at all in the interests of the government, one should sooner establish an order for conversion to that sect that would make difficult or at least would retard such conversion.”³³ What precisely now rendered the Baptists objectionable is not clear, but in any event the rules finally established in 1879 did not directly address the matter of conversion, treating the Baptists as an already-existing group whose religious affairs required regulation. Still, in contrast to the state’s refusal to recognize Baptists of Orthodox origin, the rules of 1879 did grant to Baptists of Lutheran origin the right to confess their faith within certain parameters.³⁴ In essence this arrangement corresponded to the vision of the Lutheran clergy itself, who, rejecting coercion in matters of faith as “harmful,” had concluded that the correct approach was to recognize the Baptists, while withholding from them the right to proselytize.³⁵

Evangelical Christianity expanded in Russia not only at the expense of Lutheranism or even Orthodoxy. Protestant missionaries from Basel, Switzerland had been active in the Caucasus region in the early nineteenth century, and Protestantism also began to cross the border from the Ottoman Empire and Persia, where it had taken root among some Armenians. In 1861 a group of eighty-one Armenians from Shemakha wrote to the Sovereign of their newly found Protestant convictions and their desire for affiliation with the Evangelical–Lutheran Church. This request created an extraordinarily complex situation for imperial authorities. The state had long provided “special patronage” to the Armenian Church not only because the Gregorian confession stood closer to Orthodoxy in dogmatic terms than all other foreign confessions, but also as a way of influencing Armenians in other countries—especially Turkey. “Armenians,” the Department claimed, “no matter what country they live in, always see in Russia the protector of their church and nationality.” And the Foreign Ministry stated baldly in 1866 that Echmiadzin, the seat of the Armenian Patriarch (Catholics), serves “as a powerful instrument of foreign policy” for the government. Russia’s failure to defend that church from Protestantism within its own borders would not only seriously weaken its standing among Armenians abroad—to the grave detriment of its eastern policy—but also provide Great Britain with an excuse to establish consulates in Transcaucasia, thereby deepening its influence on the peoples of the Caucasus.³⁶ At stake in this matter were Russia’s standing in the East and its very integrity.

The government’s principal goal, therefore, was to effectuate reconciliation between the petitioners and the Patriarch. The petitioners indicated that they had been prepared to remain officially in the Gregorian Church as long as they were allowed to gather and read Holy Scripture, but that the Patriarch had eventually excommunicated them. Fearing the establish-

ment of an Armenian Protestant Church in Russia and regarding the Patriarch's "spirit of intolerance and religious persecution" as being "alien to the spirit of Christian teaching and our laws," Minister of Internal Affairs P. A. Valuev instructed Mateos to permit the petitioners to receive religious rites from the Gregorian clergy and to allow them to study scripture.³⁷ The Patriarch proved unable to effectuate the reconciliation, however, and the remaining Gregorians in Shemakha began to file complaints against the Protestants, accusing them of proselytizing among their youth. The local community was now fundamentally divided, with both sides appealing to state authorities for intervention.

The crisis placed two sets of imperatives fundamentally at odds with one another. On the one hand, the state had a clear interest in protecting the Gregorian Church for the sake of its foreign policy and its prestige among Armenians generally. Moreover, imperial law prohibited the interference of the representatives of one religion in the affairs of another, while in the present case there were strong suspicions that the Basel missionaries were continuing to proselytize through their former students. Indeed, one of the most prominent Armenian Protestants, Sarkis Ambursumov, had studied in Basel and for a time had served as their agent, even though the Basel missionaries now insisted that he was no longer in contact with them.³⁸ On the other hand, imperial law explicitly permitted adherents of one Christian confession to transfer to another "of their own accord." The petitioners themselves had stated clearly that they had no desire "to constitute a new sect" but sought instead to join the "existing" Evangelical-Lutheran Church. Viceroy Grand Duke Michael spoke for many officials when he argued that "inhibiting the freedom of conscience and religious beliefs" of the petitioners was inconsistent with imperial law and, by creating "martyrs," would only generate greater sympathy for them and their teaching.³⁹

The task, in this context, was to determine whether the petitioners' desire to convert was the result of "their own conviction and conscience" or external instigation. However politically undesirable "schism" in the Armenian Church Department director, E. K. Sievers, concluded that "if the government receives confirmation of *the sincerity of their convictions and the consciousness of their desire to join the Lutheran Church*, further prevention of the realization of that desire would not be in accord ... with the spirit of our legislation." Sievers therefore proposed the removal of Ambursumov and his most active partners and the elimination of any and all activity on the part of the Basel missionaries. If, thereafter, the petitioners still desired to join Lutheranism, "then without doubt they should be allowed to do so," as long as they submitted to the authority of the Lutheran Church in Russia. The removal of Ambursumov and his colleagues would not constitute "persecution," Sievers added, since they themselves were violating the empire's civil laws by proselytizing and (apparently) maintaining connec-

tions with Basel.⁴⁰ Thus, the government was prepared to protect the Armenian Church up to a point, but its commitment to “freedom of conscience” ultimately proved stronger.

Even after Mateos had reversed his earlier excommunication and Amburtsumov had been expelled from Shemakha, the petitioners showed no signs of reconciling themselves to the Gregorian confession. An official sent by the Evangelical–Lutheran General Consistory made a strenuous but unsuccessful effort to convince the Armenians to return “to the bosom of their ancestral faith” (*v lono praroditel'skoi tserkvi*). In this context, the meaning of “schism” changed to favor the Protestants. If initially their break from the Gregorian confession was construed as a “schism” that the government should seek to prevent, now “schism” was understood to represent the likely result if the petitioners were *not* permitted to leave Gregorianism, since they would then constitute a divisive party within the church and a magnet for all its dissatisfied elements. Better for the state that the dissenters join a recognized confession instead of creating “a distinct sect,” and better for the church itself to be deprived of a few of its adherents “than to allow schism to appear within its midst.” Accordingly, a Lutheran parish, subordinated to the Consistory in Moscow, was established in Shemakha in 1866.⁴¹

This accommodation of “conscience” clearly had its price, however. The Asiatic Department of the Foreign Ministry complained bitterly about the failure to do more in defending the Armenian Church. The apparent threat to the church in Russia “cannot fail to produce among foreign Armenians the strongest anxieties and to give place to new reasons for distrust of Russia, and, as a result, to complicate the activity of the Foreign Ministry in the east.”⁴² But Valuev contended that preventing conversion from one tolerated confession to another was inconsistent with “the spirit of our legislation,” while Sievers later explained that the government had done everything in its legal power, refusing to authorize the transfer of the Armenians to Lutheranism for almost five years, forbidding their religious assemblies, and exiling their leader. “[O]nly when experience showed the failure of these measures were [the petitioners] allowed to join the Lutheran Church.” In the end, Sievers concluded, the responsibility for protecting the interests of the Armenian Church rested principally with its own religious leadership, and in any event police measures would probably only damage the moral authority of the church, thereby rendering it more susceptible to “propaganda.” The administration in the Caucasus echoed that it was employing all legal measures to protect the Armenian Church, but that it had no right to inhibit freedom of conscience, “which is the right of every Russian subject.”⁴³

Categorizing the Armenians as Lutherans had the advantage of subordinating them to a recognized and regulated religious authority with a teaching familiar and acceptable to the state. The petitioners seem initially

to have accepted their classification as Lutherans, but subsequently their strongly evangelical character rose more visibly to the fore. Originally provided by the Basel missionaries, their teaching was nurtured thereafter by American missionaries in Turkey and Persia. Local authorities wrote that Protestantism was being propagated in the Caucasus “not only in the form of a confession tolerated and recognized in the Empire, but—and this fact has grave significance—in the form of sectarian false teachings, in particular Baptist ones.” Previous efforts to funnel Protestant petitioners into Lutheranism were no longer effective, as self-proclaimed “Armeno-Evangelicals,” by the 1880s, were seeking recognition as a distinct church of their own, directly subordinate to the MVD rather than to a Lutheran consistory. They strengthened their claims by noting that Old Believers—schismatics from the “predominant church”—had received substantial rights in a law of 1883, while they, having broken from a merely *tolerated* religion, were still deprived of comparable protections.⁴⁴ Coming in the 1880s, when Baptist teachings had begun to spread more widely among the Russian Orthodox population, these requests were typically rejected by the state. Yet they also coincided with the state’s growing dissatisfaction with its Armenian population, in general, and the Armenian Church, in particular.⁴⁵ The problem of Armenian Protestants accordingly remained unresolved.

Protestantism was unquestionably the source of most of the sectarian movements and new religions that appeared in Russia. But one of the largest dissident movements—the Mariavites—arose within Catholicism. Developing from the 1890s, this movement eventually became a rebellion of dissident Catholic priests against the existing church hierarchy. The Mariavites considered themselves to be Catholic and did not seek to break from the church, but the Polish episcopate intensively lobbied against them with the Pope and suspended the dissident priests in early 1906. By April of that year the Pope had ordered the Mariavites to submit to the Polish hierarchy, and when they refused he excommunicated the group’s leaders. Thus was born “the first schism in Polish Catholicism since the Reformation.”⁴⁶

The imperial state faced the appearance of the Mariavites in the midst of the revolutionary crisis of 1905–07 and an exceedingly complicated reform of the entire religious order.⁴⁷ Initially reluctant to interfere in the dispute, by the spring of 1906 the government could no longer stand aside, since conflicts between Mariavites and loyalist Catholics over church property had become violent (eight persons were killed in one such a confrontation). Notably, the Catholic hierarchy itself turned to the government for protection from the Mariavites, arguing that renegade priests could join other faiths if they wished, but were not entitled to consider themselves Catholics while inciting the population against the episcopate. Because Catholic priests performed important functions of state service, the hierarchy argued, the government should aid in removing the Mariavites from their positions and ensuring the church’s control of its property—i.e., the

parish churches and other buildings that were the objects of intense dispute.⁴⁸ In fact, the Catholic Church in Russia had been granted full control over the appointment and removal of its own parish clergy in December of 1905. Some in the government were therefore reluctant to interfere in these matters now and perhaps even took pleasure in watching the Polish Church struggle with the consequences of its newly won freedoms.

Nonetheless, while seeking to secure the needs and interests of *both* the Mariavites and the members of the official church, the MVD made fairly clear in 1906 that its preference lay with the latter. "Not considering itself called upon to protect either the purity of the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church or its integrity," the Ministry nonetheless regarded as "incompatible with the dignity of the government to grant any kind of particular protection to a new religious movement with the goal of inflicting harm on Catholicism." The Pope, in siding with what imperial authorities called "orthodox Catholics" (*pravovernyye katoliki*), indicated that the Mariavites would have to be regarded as a "sect," distinct from the Catholic Church. Moreover, even if entitled to "legal and independent existence" by the state's proclamation of "freedom of conscience" in the October Manifesto, such sects "may not, in the opinion of the Ministry, enjoy identical rights with religions existing in the country that have already been recognized by law, and whose protection is the duty of the government, on an equal basis with the defense of the legal rights of the Orthodox Church." As "a state institution" the official Catholic Church "may obviously rely fully on the government's defense of [its] legal rights."⁴⁹ The Ministry thus proposed a set of temporary rules for the Mariavites that declared them a recognized sect with the right of free confession, while protecting the rights of the loyalist Catholic clergy and the church's property.⁵⁰

This preference for the established Catholic Church turned out to be temporary, however. Having separated from the Catholic Church in 1906, the Mariavite movement developed quickly thereafter, drawing adherents from the peasantry and the working class. They eventually established seventy-four communities with some 160,000 adherents and thirty-two priests. By approving a statute for this group in 1909; by recognizing them as an "independent religious teaching" in 1912; and by establishing a system for the appointment of Mariavite bishops with imperial confirmation, the state created a full-fledged new confession in Russian Poland, entirely independent of its mother church in institutional terms. By 1913, recognizing that its earlier rulings had left virtually all church property (including parish churches) in the hands of the Catholic Church, the government was even subsidizing the Mariavites and granting their clergy free transport on imperial railways.⁵¹

This reorientation was rooted partly in political considerations. As the group grew and caused ever greater consternation in Catholic circles, the government recognized that the Mariavites represented a useful weapon

against the Catholic clergy, who “expend on this embittered battle with the ‘internal enemy’ the energy that previously was enlisted for the purposes of opposing Russian interests and the government in one form or another.” The government should therefore cease protecting Catholicism from the Mariavites “for the sake of abstract juridical principles.”⁵² The Mariavites were all the more attractive to the imperial government since their clergy scrupulously refrained from engaging in politics and condemned nationalism as being incompatible with universal Christian love. Bishop Kowalski wrote to his flock in 1910 that they should pay “particular attention to our relations with other people, other confessions and nationalities, and we will try to discard that Pharisaic leavening of religious and ethnic hatred in which our previous leaders sought to steep us.”⁵³ Having long regarded the Catholic Church as an instrument of Polish nationalism, the government now saw in the Mariavites a useful ally. Rome meanwhile complained bitterly that the government had undertaken “to encourage the mutinous Mariavites to the detriment of the Catholic Church that was their Mother.”⁵⁴

But the government’s approach was also rooted in practical considerations. Given the Pope’s attitude and the relatively small size of the group, Mariavites were initially classified as a “sect.” Yet already in 1907 Stolpyin, presumably with their growth and relatively coherent organization in mind, raised the possibility that Mariavites might soon merit “the rights of a distinct confession with hierarchical organization.”⁵⁵ In 1909 the Mariavites joined forces with the “Old Catholic” movement in Europe, which had broken with the Pope over the declaration of infallibility in 1870 and had established the Utrecht Union of Churches, centered in the Netherlands. It was under the authority of this group that Kowalski was consecrated as a bishop.⁵⁶ Aside from the fact that the various local Mariavite communities clearly constituted a single whole, the state now had to deal with the undeniable fact that Kowalski exercised authority over “legally existing organizations” without being legally responsible for the directives that he issued. Such a person, the Department argued, “without question should receive a clear status in the state that is defined by and responsible to state authority.” Kowalski was therefore designated “Administrator of all Mariavite communities in Russia” in 1910,⁵⁷ and from there it was only a small step to recognizing a full-fledged religious hierarchy for the Mariavites. In short, the structure of the Mariavites’ organization, its link to the Utrecht Union, and its sheer size made it logical to recognize it as a “confession.”

PROBLEMS AND PRINCIPLES

The experience of the various “sects” we have considered here were clearly conditioned by the changing historical context in which they arose. Even if the foreign confessions were regarded as important sources of stability until the end of the old regime, the state nonetheless exhibited a stronger sense

of cooperation with them in the first half of the nineteenth century than it did later on.⁵⁸ The state clearly regarded the Catholic hierarchy with much greater suspicion after the Polish insurrection of 1863, and its growing confrontation with the Armenian Church led eventually to its attempt to confiscate the church's property in 1903. In general, as the government embarked in the 1860s on a project of reform designed to create a more standardized civil order, and as it adopted a policy of more heavy-handed Russification in the 1880s, deeper doubts appeared concerning virtually all the foreign confessions. Publicists and statesmen began to argue that foreign clergies were instrumental in protecting regional and cultural particularisms—thereby hindering Russia's efforts to create a more unified and efficient state—or simply that their clergies were ignorant fanatics or greedy charlatans.⁵⁹ Still, even if the government sensed the political expediency of supporting "schism" for the purposes of weakening the foreign confessions, it was only in the case of the Mariavites that the state identified such an advantage *explicitly*.

The state dealt with each case of "schism" in a particularistic fashion, yet there was also a growing tendency over the course of the century to conceptualize the problem in more abstract and comprehensive terms. To be sure, there was a good deal of muddling through in each case, precisely because the government lacked any clearly stated principles. But by 1875, at least as regards Protestantism, the Department had recognized the need for "*a single general set of rules for all the newly-arisen sects that have been recognized as unharmed*."⁶⁰ Having done little over the course of the next decades, the MVD in 1906–07 finally composed a bill regulating the establishment and recognition of new confessions and religious teachings as part of a package of legislation designed to effectuate "freedom of conscience" as promised in the October Manifesto. While reserving for the MVD power to recognize new religious groupings, the bill nonetheless articulated general rules that would apply to such groups arising from all confessions in the empire save Orthodoxy.⁶¹ Yet this bill suffered the fate of almost all of Stolypin's bills on "freedom of conscience"; it was withdrawn from consideration and never went into effect.⁶² Ultimately, then, despite the tendency towards greater abstraction, the problem of "schism" was addressed on a particularistic basis until the very end of the old regime.

A number of issues proved especially significant in the state's dealings with "schism." First, sects' tendencies towards proselytism clearly complicated the process of their recognition by the state, since toleration in Russia for all confessions and groups came at the price of foregoing proselytism.⁶³ Yet the very appearance of sects implied some element of proselytism, while those who were attracted to such sects, as the Kiev Governor-General wrote of the Baptists, "do not hide their convictions, but on the contrary consider it their Christian duty, as the Apostles, to declare them [openly] and to sanctify those who, in their view, have gone astray."⁶⁴ Indeed,

especially when religious beliefs were new (and deeply held), it was extremely difficult to draw a clear distinction between the profession of those beliefs, which most officials believed should not be subject to persecution, and their active dissemination, which they regarded as being legitimately punishable. So fine was that distinction, I would argue, that the state probably *could* have used the accusation of “proselytism” against virtually any one of the groups that it decided to recognize. Instead, after ascertaining that a genuine change in religious consciousness had occurred, the state generally sought to recognize sects while hindering their further spread, or as Sievers wrote with respect to the Armenian Protestants “*to impede the spread of schism within the Armenian Church while not inhibiting freedom of conscience.*”⁶⁵

Like proselytism, the foreign connections of the sects represented a source of considerable concern for the government. Baptist teaching had come across the border from Prussia, while its followers tended to look to Hamburg for schooling and guidance. Even officials’ recognition that American missionaries had as much to do as Basel with the spread of Protestantism in the Caucasus provided little comfort, since it appeared likely that the British would exploit the Americans’ success for their own benefit.⁶⁶ The detractors of the sects underscored these foreign connections. Tiesenhausen stressed in 1833 that the Hernhutters were “foreigners” and that their sect “stands under the authority of leaders living abroad, who, being alien to our Fatherland and Throne, can at any point maliciously use their influence over their adherents in Russia.”⁶⁷ Referring to the Prussian origins of the Baptists in Courland, a Lutheran provost similarly remarked that “a movement incited and supported from beyond the border” clearly warranted the government’s attention, “since from this may appear a multitude of evils.”⁶⁸ And yet these foreign connections gave the government good reason to recognize these sects and to establish clear rules for the regulation of their affairs, precisely so that the sectarians would not be guided solely by directives emanating from beyond the empire’s borders. As regards the Mariavites, if the state was now obligated to recognize their connection to the Utrecht Union, it was simultaneously spared from dealing on their behalf with Rome. Relations with Rome had almost always been a source of frustration and difficulty for the imperial government.⁶⁹

Practical and administrative considerations also created serious dilemmas. Accustomed to dealing with institutionally coherent, hierarchically structured, and theologically stable confessions, sects confronted the state with seemingly inchoate religious groupings lacking the appurtenances of organized religion. Perhaps the most significant issue in this regard concerned metrical books—records of births, marriages and deaths that were usually maintained by clergy and that were crucial for determining the age and legitimacy of children, inheritance rights, eligibility for exemptions from the military draft, and so on.⁷⁰ It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance that the government attached to these books and therefore the

degree to which this issue conditioned any effort to regulate sectarians' religious life. Sectarians themselves usually sought to have the obligation of maintaining metrical books transferred to their own leaders, since only then would their own religious rituals have civil and legal significance, thereby liberating them from dependence on the clergy of their previous confessions. The government, in its turn, was skeptical that sectarian leaders could be depended upon to maintain the records with the required diligence and accuracy.⁷¹ Still, this question probably pushed the state toward recognizing the sects, since it appeared likely that many sectarians would sooner forego the legal certification of their families' marriages, births, and deaths if this required them to participate in religious rituals that they no longer recognized. In light of the administrative chaos that would ensue, even those officials who considered recognition of a given sect to be "premature" usually agreed that the question of their civil deeds required immediate resolution. When the state made an accommodation with Orthodoxy's own "sectarians" (*raskol'niki*) in 1874—obligating local police to maintain their metrical books and thus investing their religious acts with civil validity—this arrangement was held up as a model for those sectarians who had broken from the foreign confessions. Rules for the Baptists, finally put into effect in 1879, entrusted their metrical books to local civil authorities.⁷² The Baptist model was in turn adopted with respect to the Mariavites in 1906, at least until they were recognized as a confession in 1912 and thereby gained the right to maintain their metrical books themselves.

Finally, political concerns were clearly relevant to the resolution of such cases. Although files give no clear indication, one may well infer that the state's efforts to come to terms with the Baptists were conditioned by a growing Russian challenge to Baltic particularism and regional autonomy.⁷³ The state's recognition of the political advantages of defending the Armenian Church significantly inflected its attitude towards the Protestants of Shemakha, though ultimately did not prove decisive. Finally, the government's recognition of the Mariavites' political utility in confronting Catholicism was central to its decision to raise that group from the status of a "sect" to an "independent religious teaching." Still, as these examples show, political considerations could work both *for* and *against* schismatics.

CONCLUSION

There can be little doubt that the foreign confessions enjoyed the Sovereign's "patronage" (*pokrovitel'stvo*) and that by its own laws the state took upon itself the task of "maintaining religious discipline" for Christian and non-Christian religions alike. In 1907, the MVD's draft law explicitly declared that the recognized confessions enjoyed "the status of state institutions," and that therefore "[t]he protection of the inviolability of their rights and freedom constitutes, according to the law, a direct obligation of the admin-

istration.”⁷⁴ Yet for all this, these legal obligations did not translate into a clear conviction that it was the state’s job to combat schism. Concerning Baptists, the Governor of Petrovsk province in Poland wrote to his subordinates in 1869 that “the Russian government is not obligated to guard the purity of the faith of the Lutheran-Augsburg confession, which is not the predominant [confession], but merely one tolerated in this country.” The Department in its turn stated in 1875 that “our laws do not impose upon the government the obligation of protecting the purity of the religious teachings of the tolerated confessions, and therefore safeguarding the foreign confessions from the appearance of schism is not among the tasks of the government.”⁷⁵ The bill of 1907, despite its references to the “rights and freedoms” of recognized confessions, repeated these words almost verbatim, adding that the unconditional prohibition of sectarians’ prayer gatherings represented “religious persecution.”⁷⁶ Along these lines, in 1909 Stolypin commented that the excessive stringency of local police in regulating the religious gatherings of sectarians who had broken off from tolerated confessions was generating “justified complaints that the government is taking upon itself the job of maintaining the purity of one or another non-Orthodox Christian confession.” If a given sect did not violate “state interest or the demands of morality,” Stolypin concluded, its prayer gatherings should not be subject to restrictions.⁷⁷

These statements suggest that by the second half of the nineteenth century the state was opposed not so much to the appearance of “schism” across the board, but rather certain *forms* of “schism.” Even Nicholas I, for all his concern with conformity, declared in 1843 with regard to a Lutheran sect known as the “separatists,” “as long as the sectarians unconditionally fulfill all their civil obligations, leave them without any persecution.”⁷⁸ Grasping the principle behind this assertion, many of the new sects were quick to underscore their obedience to authority, their devotion to fatherland, their readiness to pray for the Sovereign, and the general compatibility of their teachings with the moral values of the autocracy.⁷⁹ In essence, the state’s growing tendency in Russia to evaluate the dangers of sects in terms of social, as opposed to religious, terms—or “harm” as opposed to “heresy”⁸⁰—opened up a space for sects originating in the foreign confessions, as long as their teachings were compatible with the prevailing order. In most cases, it appears they were.

It is worth underscoring, however, that in most of the cases considered here, representatives of the foreign confessions themselves in one way or another expressed a willingness to see the dissenters separated from their churches. True, Lutherans eventually denied that the Hernhutters actually represented a “sect” within the Lutheran confession, apparently with the hope of not losing them to Orthodoxy. But Lutherans were quite prepared for the Baptists to receive some kind of recognition, since only then would their activities be appropriately limited. In the case of the Armenians, the

Patriarch himself excommunicated the dissenters, even though the state subsequently compelled him to reverse this act. Mateos may well have hoped that the excommunication would force the Protestants to repent, but his act signaled his willingness to allow them go their own way and thus facilitated their recognition as Lutherans once it became clear that no reconciliation was forthcoming. In the case of the Mariavites, too, the head of the Church (the Pope) excommunicated the group's leaders, thereby indicating that they and their followers were no longer members of the official Catholic Church. As Stolypin related, the MVD had "considered it possible to grant them an independent existence *only after the Mariavites had been declared apostates from the Roman Catholic Church by the Papal throne.*"⁸¹ In short, "schism" was much more likely to receive recognition when the leaders of the sectarians' original church agreed that the dissenters warranted separation. In this respect, the state remained, as Crews' account implies, deferential to the recognized confessional elite with whom it had forged significant ties of cooperation.

Still, this deference was conditioned by a rising concern in the department for religious conviction and belief. In a forceful analysis in 1905, the legal scholar Mikhail Reisner argued that in establishing a system of religious discipline over the foreign confessions, the law "does not at all concern itself with the sincerity of the religious convictions of the individual person or his freedom."⁸² While this may be true of the law—which, as we have seen, was principally the product of the Nikolaevan era—I propose that we should take more seriously the fact that the government saw itself as the upholder of religious toleration and even "freedom of conscience" and generally opposed measures of "religious persecution" as being "contrary to the spirit of our legislation" and usually ineffective. This is not to say that the state's commitment to toleration was absolute and overrode all other considerations, or that it pertained to all people and confessions equally. Attempts to regulate schisms before 1905 were always conditioned by the caveat that no members of the Orthodox Church could join the new religious groups. And each case of "schism" involved a range of political, ideological, and legal concerns that had to be weighed against the religious aspirations of the sectarians. But precisely because "schism" in the foreign confessions remained once removed from the principal object of the empire's confessional order—the Orthodox Church and its "predominant" status—a discourse of belief, conviction, and conscience could arise and obtain a certain currency among state officials. In this reading, even as the law construed religious toleration primarily in terms of existing confessions and religious institutions—and thus to provide mechanisms for disciplining the adherents to those confessions—in their administration of religious affairs tsarist officials proved increasingly willing to regard toleration as applying to *individuals*. Without overstating the case, we may conclude that in some respects the administration was actually more liberal than the laws under which it operated.

NOTES

- 1 For financial support for the research and writing of essay, I wish thank the International Research and Exchanges Board (with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Information Agency, and the US Department of State); the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research; and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
- 2 R. Crews, "Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *The American Historical Review* 108:1 (February 2003): 50–83 (citations from 52 and 58).
- 3 This term [*inostrannaia ispovedaniia*] was used to designate the officially recognized non-Orthodox religions and confessions of the Russian Empire. Recognizing the tendentious character of this designation, I nonetheless dispense with quotation marks in subsequent references to them.
- 4 Jews were the one exception in this regard, as new sects could form with the permission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. See M. Reisner, *Gosudarstvo i veruushchaia lichnost'* (St. Petersburg: Biblioteka "Obshchestvennoi Pol'zy," 1905), 175.
- 5 The concepts "schism" [*raskol*] and "sect" [*sekta*] are of course difficult to define in any objective or neutral sense. My concern here is principally with subjective perception and the question of the integrity of foreign confessions.
- 6 This occurred in the decree establishing the Main Administration of the Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions, which became a department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1832. See *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, first series, vol. 31, no. 24307 (25 July 1810).
- 7 Statutes appeared for the Muslims of Crimea in 1831, Kalmyk Buddhists in 1834 (with some modifications in 1847), Jews in 1835, the Armenian–Gregorian Church in 1836, the Karaites in 1837, Buddhists of Eastern Siberia in 1853, and for Muslims in Transcaucasia in 1872.
- 8 Presumably based on the model of the Holy Synod, the imperial government seems to have preferred collegial rule. See materials on the Echmiadzin Synod and the Roman Catholic college in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (henceforward RGIA), f. 821, op. 7, d. 306, 33ob.–34; RGIA, f. 821, op. 125, d. 41, ll. 46ob.–57ob.
- 9 On this institutionalization, E. Amburger, *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Russland* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1961), 62–88; V. Bashkevich, *Istoricheskii obzor zakonodatel'stva ob ustroistve Evangelicheskoi-Liuteranskoi tserkvi v Pribaltiiskom krae* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia MVD, 1890); D. D. Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe magometanskoe dukhovnoe sobranie v kontse XVIII–XIX vv.* (Ufa: Gilem, 1999); "Evrei–karaimy," *Zhurnal MVD*, part 1 (1843): 263–284; V. Vashkevich, *Lamaity v vostochnoi Sibiri* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia MVD, 1885); V. G. Vartanian, *Armiansko-Gregorianskaia tserkov' v politike imperatora Nikolaia I* (Rostov-na-Donu: Irbis, 1999); M. Radwan, "Vvedenie," in M. Radwan, ed., *Katolicheskaiia Tserkov' nakanune revoliutsii 1917 goda* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2003), 22–42; K. Bogoslovskii, *Gosudarstvennoe polozhenie Rimsko-Katolicheskoi tserkvi v Rossii ot Ekatierinoi Velikoi do nastoiashchego vremeni* (Khar'kov: Tipografiia Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1898).
- 10 This had been a significant concern for Peter the Great in his dealings with Orthodoxy. See A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii, 1700–1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevnekhranilishche, 2000), 341–435.

- 11 N. Varadinov, *Istoriia Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del*, part 3, book 1 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia MVD, 1861), 113–14, 232–33; “O Evangelicheskoi-Liuteranskoi tserkvi v Rossiiskoi Imperii,” *Zhurnal MVD*, part 19, otd. 2 (1856): 55–56, 61–64. Andrei Bobylev stresses this “conservative” character of Lutheranism in Russia in “Istoriia i pravovoe polozhenie Liuteranskoi tserkvi v Rossii do 1917 g.,” *Nasha tserkov’* 3–5 (1996): 47.
- 12 Cited in Varadinov, *Istoriia*, part 3, book 1, 550; Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (henceforward, GARF), f. 109 (eksp. 1), op. 11, d. 301, ll. 37ob.–38.
- 13 *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1832), 45.
- 14 RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, l. 53; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 66, l. 2ob. Thus whereas most conversions from one confession to another required the permission of the Minister of Internal Affairs, beginning in 1852 the conversion of Armenians from Catholicism to Gregorianism did not.
- 15 Zakonoproekt, “Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh,” in M. Radwan, *Katolicheskaiia tserkov’*, 240. In elaborating this thesis of the wholesale incorporation of “national religions,” the MVD was almost surely drawing on the ideas of the legal scholar Mikhail Reisner, who had articulated this idea in *Gosudarstvo*, 156–98.
- 16 “Pravitel’stvennye mery po sluchaiu poiavleniia v Lifliandii sekty Gernguterov v 1743 g.,” *Russkii arkhiv* 9 (1868): 1391–95.
- 17 A. Vasil’ev, “Veroterpimost’ v zakonodatel’sve i zhizni v tsarstvovanie imperatora Aleksandra I (1801–1825),” *Nabliudatel’* 7 (1896): 272–74; E. A. Vishlenkova, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii pervoi chetverti XIX veka* (Kazan: Izdatel’stvo Kazanskogo universiteta, 1998), 115.
- 18 GARF, f. 109 (eksp. 1), op. 11, d. 301, l. 37ob. See also E. Vishlenkova, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 116.
- 19 In line with the larger mystical reorientation in Russia, the head of the Evangelical-Lutheran General Consistory (Karl von Lieven) had replaced the majority of the “rationalistic” professors of the Theology Faculty at Dorpat University in the 1820s with Pietists. See E. Vishlenkova, *Dukhovnaia shkola*, 112–13, 120–22; J. T. Flynn, *The University Reform of Tsar Alexander I, 1802–1853* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 125.
- 20 GARF, f. 109 (eksp. 1), op. 11, d. 301, ll. 4ob.–9, 16a–20 (citations from ll. 5, 9, 17, and 19ob.–20).
- 21 Ibid., ll. 4, 8.
- 22 GARF, f. 109 (eksp. 1), op. 18, d. 83, ll. 51ob.–52. This initiative may be seen as part of Uvarov’s general aspiration to bring universities in non-Russian regions into closer conformity with Russian universities. See C. H. Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Sergei Uvarov, 1786–1855* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 189–212; and M. H. Haltzel, “The Baltic Germans,” in E. C. Thaden, ed., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 120–121.
- 23 GARF, f. 109 (eksp. 1), op. 18, d. 83, ll. 24–26, 59–61, 67–67ob. The committee was staffed by Tiesenhausen, A. Kh. Benkendorff (head of the Third Department), Ministers of Education and Internal Affairs Sergei Uvarov and Lev Perovskii. The first two persons were themselves Lutherans.
- 24 On the terms of Baltic emancipation, see E. C. Thaden, *Russia’s Western Borderlands, 1710–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 107–109; and Iu. F. Samarin, “Pravoslavnye latyshi: period vtoroi, 1845–1848 g.,” in *Sochineniia Iu. F. Samarina*, vol. 10 (Moscow: Tipografiia A. I. Mamontova, 1896), 411–12.

- 25 My account here is based on the detailed research of A. V. Gavrilin, *Ocherki istorii Rizhskoi eparkhii XIX veka* (Riga: Filokaliia, 1999), 73–182. See also M.H. Haltzel, “Baltic Germans,” 121–123. Uvarov is cited in in Iu. Samarin, “Pravoslavnye latyshy,” 434.
- 26 Cited in Iu. Samarin, “Pravoslavnye latyshy,” 435 (it is not clear if the emphasis was in the original or was added by Samarin); Gavrilin, *Ocherk*, 102. Referring to the limits of human reason, Nicholas stated in 1848, “[T]here are subjects that are impossible to analyze; one needs to place one’s hope in Providence and believe; from this derives the fall of Protestantism, for it based everything on human reason.” Cited in Leonid E. Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: poliki v Rossii i russkie v Pol’she* (Moscow: Indrik, 1999), 81.
- 27 A. Gavrilin, *Ocherki*, 134–36; I. Lindenberg, “Protestantskii sekty v Pribaltiiskom krae,” *Rizhskie eparkhal’nye vedomosti* 10 (1891): 354–56. On the consequences, see also M.N. Haltzel, “Baltic Germans,” 122–23, 146–49, 161–67.
- 28 I. Lindenberg, “Protestanskii sekty,” no. 15, p. 510.
- 29 On religious sects in the Baltic region, see I. Lindenberg, “Protestanskii sekty,” *Rizhskie eparkhal’nye vedomosti* 10–15 (1891): 340–56, 376–82, 416–28, 455–57, 487–92, 507–12; Iu. Osterblom, *Noveishie religioznye dvizheniia v Estliandii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia F. Eleonskago, 1885); E. V. “Kul’turno-religioznye dvizheniia v Lifliandii,” *Khristianskoe chtenie* 1–2, 3–4 (1887): 229–77, 326–77; and the brochure *Liuterskii sekty v Estliandskoi gubernii* (Riga, 1893), in RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 1020, ll. 1–33ob.
- 30 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 980, ll. 5–11ob., 52–56 (citations from ll. 9ob.–10, 52ob., 54–54ob.).
- 31 Ibid., l. 79.
- 32 Ibid., ll. 85ob.–93 (citations from ll. 85ob.–86, 88ob., 92).
- 33 Ibid., l. 283ob. The cited notation is not dated, but was apparently written by A. E. Timashev, who replaced P. A. Valuev as Minister in March 1868.
- 34 On the problem of Russian versus German Baptists, see Heather Jean Coleman, “The Most Dangerous Sect: Baptists in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, 1905–1929” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1998), esp. pp. 42–44; and S. N. Savinskii, *Istoriia Evangel’skikh Khristian-Baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii, 1867–1917* (St. Petersburg, “Bibliia dlia vsek,” 1999). On the 1879 rules, see RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 780, ll. 53–55.
- 35 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 980, ll. 79, 98–100ob.
- 36 RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, ll. 2–8 (citation from l. 4ob.); RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175 (citation from l. 62). On the issue of Echmiadzin and foreign policy, see RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 82, l. 10ob. and the deliberations in RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 306.
- 37 RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, ll. 2ob., 8, and 22; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175, l. 39ob.
- 38 *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vol. 11, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1857), 4; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, ll. 6–6ob., 12–13.
- 39 *Svod zakonov* (St. Petersburg, 1857), 6; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, ll. 2–3, 15–24 (citations from ll. 3, 21–21ob.).
- 40 RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, ll. 39–41 (citation from l. 39ob., emphasis in the original).
- 41 Ibid., ll. 74–76, 97–100 (citation from ll. 75ob.–76).
- 42 Ibid., ll. 85–86ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 138, l. 3.
- 43 Ibid., l. 79–84ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 138, ll. 5–15 (citations from d. 138, ll. 6ob. and 12ob.).
- 44 RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, l. 189–94ob., 205–208ob. (citations from ll. 189ob. and 205).

- 45 On changing attitudes towards Armenians among imperial officials, see R. G. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 26–27, 42–51. On growing dissatisfaction with the Armenian Church, which culminated in the state's attempt to secularize its property in 1903, see *ibid.*, 48–49; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 175 (a long survey of the history of state dealings with the Armenian Church, written by in 1883); and RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, ll. 1–57 (deliberations leading to secularization).
- 46 R. E. Blobaum, *Revolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1995), 248. For basic background on Mariavites, see N. Reinke, *Mariavity* (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia Tipografiia, 1910); J. Peterkiewicz, *The Third Adam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 7–34.
- 47 The course of that religious reform has been addressed skillfully by Aleksandra A. Dorskaia, “Vopros o svobode sovesti v rossiskom zakonotvorchestve, 1905–1917 gg.” (Cand. diss., RAN Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii, St. Petersburg, 1997).
- 48 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 601, ll. 2ob.–4ob. On confrontations, see also GARF, f. 102 (O.O.), 1906, II otd., d. 12, ch. 2; N. Reinke, *Mariavity*, 15–16; J. Peterkiewicz, *Third Adam*, 35.
- 49 The Ministry cited an Imperial charter to the Kingdom of 14 February 1832 (article 5), which stated that “the Roman–Catholic faith, as the faith confessed by the larger part of OUR subjects in the Kingdom of Poland, will always be an object of the government's particular care.” (RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 601, l. 20).
- 50 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 601, ll. 9–18. The Council of Ministers approved the Ministry's position with only a few minor revisions. Temporary rules for the Mariavites—intended to govern the new community until more comprehensive legislation on the formation of new religions and sects could be passed—went into effect in November of 1906 (using article 87 to bypass the Duma).
- 51 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 601, ll. 91–97; R. Tuchtenhagen, *Religion als minderere Status: Die Reform der Gesetzgebung gegenüber religiösen Minderheiten in der verfassten Gesellschaft des Russischen Reiches, 1905–1917* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 219–224.
- 52 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 2, d. 601, ll. 54ob.–56; and RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, l. 2128, l. 21.
- 53 Cited in “Mariavity,” *Golos Moskvy* 10 (14 January 1910). On Mariavites' apolitical orientation, see also “Pol'skaia natsional'naia tserkov',” *Vilenskii vestnik* 2049 (16 April 1910): 2; and “Mariavitizm v Tsarstve Pol'skom,” *ibid.* 2073 (15 May 1910): 1–2.
- 54 “Memorandum Sviateishego Prestola Russkomu Pravitel'stvu,” in M. Radwan, *Katolicheskaiia tserkov'*, 462–64.
- 55 “Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh,” in M. Radwan, *Katolicheskaiia tserkov'*, 244–252 (citations from pp. 244, 250–51).
- 56 N. Reinke, *Mariavity*, 24; J. Peterkiewicz, *Third Adam*, 39–43; “Starokatoliki i mariavity,” *Kolokol* 1051 (11 September 1909): 1.
- 57 Lietuvos Valstybes Istorijos Archyvas, f. 378 (BS, 1908), d. 403, ll. 142–144 (citation from l. 143ob.).
- 58 Despite broad reference to “the nineteenth century” in the title of his essay, Crews acknowledges that the situation was beginning to change from about mid-century. He identifies the Crimean War as an important watershed with regard to Muslims. See R. Crews, *op. cit.*, 76–82.
- 59 The Department of Foreign Confessions appears to have undertaken a general overview of its previous policy on most of the confessions in the 1880s, usually coming to rather negative conclusions about them.
- 60 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 998, l. 73ob. (emphasis in the original). The State Council had likewise identified the need for such a generalized statute. See “Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh obshchestvakh,” p. 234.

- 61 *Spravka o svobode sovesti* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia MVD), 1906, 19; "Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh," 233–291. A separate law for those groups originating in Orthodoxy, such as Old Believers, had already been passed on 17 October 1906.
- 62 On the legislative process more broadly, see A. Dorskaia, op. cit., esp. 122–133.
- 63 *Svod zakonov*, vol. 11, part 1 (St. Petersburg, 1857), 4. Even smaller groups like the Mennonites were protected against proselytism in their midst, because "they enjoy complete toleration in Russia." RGIA, f. 381, op. 8, d. 3707, ll. 76ob.–77.
- 64 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 980, l. 9.
- 65 RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, l. 39 (emphasis in the original). Here, Sievers was actually reiterating a view already articulated by Valuev.
- 66 RGIA, f. 821, op. 138, d. 82, esp. ll. 26ob.–27. The Armenians' potential pastor, Abraham Amirkhanians, had connections with both Basel and the Americans. Ibid., ll. 16, 18ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 7, d. 65, ll. 165ob.–166.
- 67 GARF, f. 109 (eksp. 1), op. 11, d. 301, ll. 19, 22.
- 68 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 980, l. 98ob.
- 69 On Russia's complicated relationship with Rome, see the documents in M. Radwan, *Katolicheskaia tserkov'*, 453–523; and E. S. Tokareva and A. V. Iudin, eds., *Rossia i Vatikan v kontse XIX – pervoi treti XX vv.* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2003).
- 70 On metrical books, see Ch. Steinwedel, "Making Social Groups, One Person at a Time: The Identification of Individuals by Estate, Religious Confession, and Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russia," in J. Caplan, J. Torpey, eds., *Documenting Individual Identity: the Development of State Practices Since the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 67–82.
- 71 "Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh," 240, 264–65.
- 72 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 780, ll. 53–53ob.
- 73 On this issue, see H. Haltzel, "Baltic Germans," 124–49.
- 74 "Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh," p. 235.
- 75 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 980, l. 304ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 998, l. 73.
- 76 "Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh," p. 241.
- 77 RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 769, l. 3 (Department circular no. 242 of 12 January 1909).
- 78 RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 989, ll. 15–15ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 980, l. 315. Most likely Nicholas felt less compelled to protect Lutheranism when he sensed that the Baltic Germans were blocking the movement of Estonians and Latvians towards Orthodoxy (see above).
- 79 "Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh," pp. 240–241. For examples, see RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 1035, l. 12 (Adventists); RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 998, l. 3 (Irvingites).
- 80 L. Engelstein, "From Heresy to Harm: Self-Castrators in the Civil Discourse of Late Tsarist Russia," in T. Hara, K. Matsuzato, eds., *Empire and Society: New Approaches to Russian History* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 1997), 1–21; and idem, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 50–51. Accordingly, the Department concluded that *skeptisy* should be prosecuted regardless of their original confession, since their "self-mutilation" and "immoral" behavior violated *civil* obligations. RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 989, ll. 1–2ob., 15ob.
- 81 "Ob inoslavnykh i inovernykh religioznykh obshchestvakh," 256 (emphasis added).
- 82 M. Reisner, *Gosudarstvo*, 166.

Redefining Identities in the Late Ottoman Empire: Policies of Conversion and Apostasy

SELIM DERINGIL

*"Therefore I say in my heart the Faiths are like horses.
Each has merits in its own country."
Mahbub Ali, Pathan Horse Trader
in Rudyard Kipling's KIM*

This chapter is an exercise in comparative history. It aims to put conversion and apostasy in the late 19th century Ottoman Empire in the context of world historiography.

The chapter will compare the Ottoman and Russian Empires. My main focus will be perforce the Ottoman case, as the primary sources at my disposal are mostly Ottoman archival documentation. Nor do I claim in any way to be an expert in Russian history. I will therefore rely on secondary sources for my discussions of Russian cases. As such the paper has no claims to being an exhaustive study on the topic, and hopes more to use the issues of conversion and/or apostasy as a vehicle. A conscious comparative approach to Ottoman history is a fairly recent phenomenon, in a field, which has always hidden behind the "exotic façade" of the linguistic and methodological skills required of the practitioner.¹

A word about sources is in order at this point. The Ottoman archives are a tremendously rich source on religious matters. The documents I have used are mostly correspondence from the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of the interior and the Office of the Şeyhülislam, the highest religious official in the empire. This work is bound to be, at best, a mere sampling of the vast amount of documentation available. Another problem with the Ottoman archival sources is that they are not properly indexed, and the cataloguing is not always of the best quality. But the documents are invaluable first hand glimpses into a lost world. In approaching my material in a comparative perspective I have tried to keep the following questions and themes in mind, hoping through them to be able to reach out to colleagues in other fields. The "History of Empires: Comparative Approaches to History and Teaching" project, which culminated in a conference in Moscow in June 2003, forms the basis for this volume. The meeting was a very auspicious occasion to air thoughts and learn from colleagues in other fields. Particularly the papers presented by Dominic Lieven, "Empire on Europe's Periphery: Russian and Western comparisons," and Paul Werth's contribution,

“Schism once Removed: Conscience, State Authority and Meanings of Religious Toleration in Imperial Russia” were very useful from a comparative perspective.

The chapter will focus on the 1839–1909 period, and is part of a broader project to study conversion and apostasy in the Ottoman Empire from 1839 to 1918. The Tanzimat Edict of 1839 is generally accepted as the beginning of constitutional and institutional reform in the Ottoman Empire.² The next watershed is the Reform Edict of 1856 that confirmed and extended the legal reforms of the Tanzimat Edict.³ The importance of these two documents cannot be exaggerated as they represent nothing less than the institutionalization of the Rule of Law in Ottoman domains, and a wholesale adoption of what would be called the *mission civilisatrice* in the *Troisième République*. The reform period in the Ottoman Empire is the framework for this study on conversion and apostasy.

FROM THE TANZIMAT TO THE REFORM EDICT: FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS.

The Tanzimat Edict of 1839 was to guarantee equality before the law to all subjects of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.⁴ The Reform Edict of 1856 was a contract to carry out the promises made in the Tanzimat Edict. The Reform Edict is much more detailed and much longer as well as being more specific about religious freedom. It states that, “As all forms of religion are free and shall be freely professed in my dominions, no subject of my empire shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion that he professes, nor shall he be in any way annoyed on this account. No one shall be compelled to change their religion.”⁵ Although the belief among some of the contemporary observers was that the 1856 Edict specifically abolished the law ordaining the execution of apostates, there is no specific mention of apostasy anywhere in the document.⁶ Given that the 1856 Edict was so detailed regarding the position of non-Muslims it is actually possible to see it as the outcome of a period of religious restlessness following the Edict of 1839. Indeed in the years leading up to the edict of 1856, we come across a certain “liveliness” in the religious scene of the Empire. There appears to be a shifting of the sands, not only from Christianity to Islam and vice versa but also among the other religions of Ottoman society.⁷ The official position was always the same: that the state would not tolerate the use of force or any sort of compulsion in the matter of conversion to Islam, and that the legal execution of apostates from Islam was not allowed.

Yet, there is also an unmistakable undercurrent. The gist and feel of the documentation leads one to the impression that there was continuous pressure on non-Muslims to convert, and a continuing danger that apostates would be put to death. The sheer repetitiveness of the documentation ordering that compulsion was not to be permitted, hints very strongly that

a great deal of compulsion *was* being brought to play. How much of this was local and how much was state-approved is a moot point. What is clear is that for the Ottoman ruling elite, “freedom of religion” meant “freedom to defend their religion.” Indeed the wording of the Reform Edict is entirely open to this interpretation.⁸

The Ottoman Ambassador to London was instructed to ask Earl Russell the following questions:

“Can it be supposed that whilst condemning religious persecutions, the Sublime Porte has consented to permit offence and insult to any creed whatever? That at the same time she was proclaiming liberty to all non-Mussulman creeds, she had given them arms against Islamism? That she had, in fine, destroyed at the same stroke the guarantees with which she surrounded the liberty of religious convictions?”⁹

During the years leading up to the Reform Edict, there is a rising tide of documentation that implies ever-increasing sensitivity to this issue. Sensitivity to outside pressure, as well as to domestic reaction, meant that Istanbul had to walk a tightrope of reiterated orders to the provinces as well as repeated assurances to the foreign envoys that it was keeping its house in order, and by clear implication, it did not need their help.

This was precisely the gist of a conversation between the Ottoman Ambassador to London, Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, and the “Great Elchi,” the long-time British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Sir Stratford Canning, who was on leave in London. In a conversation over dinner at the Ottoman Embassy, which the Ottoman Ambassador reported on 31 January 1844, the matter of conversion and apostasy came up. Canning brought up the matter of “the recent events in Bilecik where an apostate was executed, this causing very strong feelings among the Powers.”¹⁰ Canning then went on at some length about the promises made by the Sublime Porte in this regard. At this point Ahmed Muhtar Pasha replied:

“I explained to His Excellency in the calmest manner the religious obligations incumbent on all Muslims in these cases (*bir mecburiyet-i diniyye keyfiyeti*). I also pointed out that the fact that commitments had been made in Istanbul did not mean that such events would not take place in some locality. All we could hope to accomplish would be to try to prevent the occurrence of conditions which would bring into force such obligations.”¹¹

The Ottoman Ambassador further pointed out to Canning that, “our religious obligations like our nationally established laws are very clear on this matter.” He went on, “Like Britain and France, the Sublime State and its subjects are most desirous of being quit of this vexing question.”¹² The message behind the diplomatic wording was very clear: do not push us too far

in a direction we want to go in anyway. Nonetheless the Ottoman Ambassador made a point of telling Canning that there were "religious obligations" to execute apostates which the Porte was doing its best to circumvent.

Another very clear indication that the Sublime State did not need outside interference in matters relating to the religious freedom of its subjects, is the official declaration made in 1851 that the privileges granted to non-Muslim subjects in 1453 by Mehmet the Conqueror, the conqueror of Istanbul, were still in force. It was clearly stated in the order that such a confirmation was going to be officially issued as an Imperial Edict (*Hat-ı Hümayun*) to the Greek and Armenian Patriarchates as well as the Chief Rabbi and the head of the Protestant community: "The full application of such privileges is a manifestation of the Sublime State's great affection for its subjects, and its determination not to admit any interference or meddling by any other party."¹³ It is interesting that the Porte should have hit upon the stratagem of using some four hundred year old historical precedent to ward off outside pressure, and indeed the *Hat* of 1856 specifically mentioned Fatih Sultan Mehmed by name.¹⁴

A most striking case very evocatively illustrating the problems involving foreign involvement, comes up on 27 January 1852, in the *sancak* (sub-prefecture) of Lazistan, on the eastern Black Sea coast bordering Russia, where four Georgian boys turned up professing that they had converted to Islam "of their own free will." The Russian Consul claimed them as Russian subjects, demanding that his representative should verify that their conversion had indeed been voluntary. The *sancak* officials pointed out that the usual procedure in these matters called for the presence of a consular official only if the converts were Russian subjects. On the other hand, if they were Ottoman subjects, they said, procedure simply called for the presence of the local Metropolitan or his representative, the *kocabaşı*. It was also determined by international agreement that to and fro movement of peoples across the border was to be regulated by passports, but the Georgian children had no passports. Thus, it was implied, the Russian Consul could not claim them.¹⁵

Foreign interference seems to have been very much the order of the day, with many Ottoman non-Muslims claiming to be protected by some foreign power. On September 13, 1852 the Governor of Ioannina (in Epirus, Greece) was ordered to look into the death of the servant of a high ranking Ottoman official. The official had reported that his servant had died soon after converting to Islam. However, his death had occurred in somewhat suspicious circumstances and the Austrian Embassy had intervened claiming that the deceased had been an Austrian subject who had been beaten to death while being pressed to accept Islam. Also, no Austrian official had been present to testify that the conversion was voluntary. It was therefore duly arranged that a team of doctors from the Ottoman and Austrian sides should be present as the body was exhumed and an autopsy performed.¹⁶

Many of the cases in the Balkans in the years leading up to the Reform Edict of 1856 involved the protection of so-called "Austrian subjects." In 1853 it was reported from Işkodra (Scutari) in Albania, that a certain George, and his cousin, a young girl named Antonia, had been pressured into accepting Islam. George had escaped from the fortress where he was being kept prisoner and had swum across the river to the Austrian side. Antonia, it was reported was being held in the house of a certain Beşir Galib, "in chains and under the most terrible pressure." George had told the Austrians that he wanted to return, but wanted a guarantee that he would not be pressured to accept Islam. The Porte wrote to the Mutasarrıf of Scutari that, "no Christian subject is ever to be pressured or forced in any way to accept Islam." It is worth noting that the Porte added, "such events will have a very bad effect in that area these days." The local authorities were told that they were to secure the safe conduct of both of the victims.¹⁷

The thread running through the documentation is that the Ottomans constantly felt that the consulates and embassies were looking over their shoulder in matters relating to conversion. Such was the story of Katerina, a Greek woman who was orphaned and left in the care of a certain Talip Agha in Ioannina who, "virtually imprisoned her and applied all manner of threats and promises for her to convert." The British Consul in Preveza then became involved, claiming Katerina as a British subject, therefore demanding that a British official should be present at the moment of conversion. The Ottoman government instructed the governor of Ioannina to ascertain whether Katerina had converted voluntarily and if she was in fact a British subject. It was clearly stated that no consular representative was needed if she was not.¹⁸ As in the cases above, of persons claiming Austrian protection, there seems to have been a recognized procedure whereby foreign representatives were to witness that the conversion was indeed voluntary.

CASES OF CONVERSION AND APOSTASY

In the documentation of the period one finds frequent references to cases of conversion and subsequent apostasy. The orders from the center are always in the same vein: no force or compulsion is admissible in matters of conversion. Although this author has been unable to find such a document as a "Regulation for Conversions" there is frequent reference to conversion being carried out "according to the proper procedure" (*usul ve nizamina tevfiiken*). According to these regulations, the highest-ranking religious authority available in the community of the convert had to be present at the conversion. Together with him, the convert's parents or next of kin should be in attendance. The documents testifying to the act of legitimate conversion were to be signed and sealed by Muslim and Christian officials alike. The procedure should not be hurried, and if a few days delay was required for the priest or the next of kin to arrive, the conversion was to be post-

poned. Only those children who had reached the age of puberty were allowed to convert. Also, in the case of girls who came to the ceremony veiled, the veil had to be lifted to ascertain identity.¹⁹

At the end the convert was accepted as a Muslim and registered as such, being given a "certificate of conversion" (*ihtida ilamı*).²⁰ This stickling for procedure can also be seen in the case that occurred on May 5, 1844 in Akka (Acre) whereby a young Christian girl purportedly converted to Islam, but the conversion was challenged by her parents and relatives. When summoned before the Shar'i court she recanted, saying that she had been forced into the act. The court duly ordered that, as she was a minor she should be given back to her parents.²¹ The orders state in no uncertain terms that: "No subject of the Sublime State shall be forced by anyone to convert to Islam against their wishes." It had come to the Foreign Ministry's attention that:

"There are many cases reported where the said person is a child who has been importuned by an insistence to accept Islam... In no way is this to be admitted as it is entirely in contravention of current laws and regulations as set down in the letters of patent (*berat*) given to the various Archbishoprics."²²

The pattern is usually the same. A Christian converts to Islam, the community intervenes, claiming some irregularity in the conversion process, the victim is called before the Kadi's court, and the court, no doubt under instructions from Istanbul, finds some sort of face saving solution. All this is a far cry from officially sanctioned execution of apostates. At least in one instance, the official policy of the state was stated very clearly in terms that can only be described as, "you are instructed to look the other way." On 30 October the *Muşir* of the Army of Rumelia, Reşid Paşa, was given instructions regarding his request for instructions on what to do with the apostates in the region of Noveberde. He was told in no uncertain terms that: "In offensive matters (*madde-i mekruhe*) such as these, [the offenders] should be sent to Istanbul, without being officially referred to the local Kadi court." It was deemed essential that the apostates be removed from their locality with the minimum of fanfare as, "if the case is announced in the court, then they are shipped off to Istanbul, the matter will still come to the attention of the foreign embassies and cause useless loose talk." Therefore, "the above mentioned (apostates) should be put in prison, and then after some time, when the affair had quieted down, they should be made to appear to have escaped from jail and speedily sent on their way" (*habishaneden firar edmiscesine hakimane def'lerine*). As a second option they were to set out on their exile to Istanbul under escort but "be made to appear to have escaped during the journey" (*esmayı rahda bir tarafa savuşturulmak*).²³

When the case of conversion involved a priest, matters could become even more entangled. On October 31, 1852 it was reported that an Armenian

priest had converted to Islam in a village near Van in eastern Anatolia. Not only had he converted, but he had set about demolishing the village church, "in an act of wanton enmity against the local population." Understandably, this had "caused much suffering and discomfort for the population." Acting on a complaint from the Armenian Patriarchate, the Porte ordered that since there were no other Muslims in the village the priest should be warned to behave himself, but if he persisted he would be removed to a nearby Muslim village.²⁴

Here as in the cases above, pragmatism and expediency seems to have determined the official response rather than doctrinal rigor. Yet here too, the questions of why the priest converted in the first place, and why he felt so strongly about his new faith remain unanswered.

Another thorny and ambivalent issue was the question of what defined voluntary or forced conversion. In all the documents claiming that the victim had been forced, the turn of phrase is invariably: "although nothing can be said against those who genuinely accept Islam, the use of force is against the Sultan's wishes and against the rulings of the Sharia."

In August 1844 a Christian girl was abducted by a Muslim Albanian while working in a field in the region of Leskofca near Niş. The man intended to rape her, and to save her life and honor, the girl declared that she was willing to convert. Later, upon being questioned by the Kadi's court, she recanted and told the court that she had only converted to save her life and honor, and she was still a Christian. She was then kept in confinement in a Muslim household, while her parents complained to the Metropolitan at Niş and he forwarded the complaint to the Orthodox Archbishop in Istanbul. The parents of the girl continued to complain that she was being pressured in the Muslim household where she was confined. The Porte dealt with the matter and ordered the *Kaimakam* to determine whether the conversion was forced or sincere.²⁵ A similar case was reported in Thessaloniki in the same year. A ten-year-old Armenian girl, having secured her father's permission, was taken to the local bathhouse by a Muslim woman. When she did not return home at the appointed hour, her parents went to the Muslim home, only to be told that their daughter had converted to Islam and that they should go away. The girl's parents, after failing to secure justice locally, had arrived in Istanbul to lodge a formal complaint with the Patriarchate stating that the girl was underage and that duress was used. The Porte, using the formula above, "although nothing can be said etc.," ordered that the local authorities determine the sincerity of the conversion, the age of the girl, and stated very clearly that: "if the illegal use of force has occurred, this is very damaging for the confidence of the population and can cause disruption of the order of the state..." (*insilab-ı emniyet-i reayayn mucib ve ihlal-i nizam-i memleketi müstevcib*).²⁶ On July 16, 1853, it was reported that in the small town of Bandırma in the Marmara region, a Greek girl named Despina had announced that she had converted to Islam.

She did so “as a fully conscious adult person and not as the result of threats or fear of anybody.” This she freely declared in the administrative council of the *kaza* of Bandırma. The community had then warned her family that she was about to be sent to Istanbul, and somehow arranged for her mother to smuggle her out of the Muslim house where she was being kept. The representative of the local Metropolitan was summoned and the “town was searched high and low” with no result. Two things stand out here. First, the Christian population could openly appeal to justice and claim that the conversion had been carried out in contravention of the accepted norms. Second, as in the cases above the person in question somehow “disappears” thus ceasing to be a problem for all concerned.²⁷

A case occurring in the *kaza* of Golos in Albania is very interesting as it gives us some rare insights into the actual process and procedure of conversion, and indeed apostasy. A report signed by all of the members of the administrative council of Golos (*Kaza Idare Meclisi*) and dated 23 June 1852 dealt with a miner named Aleksı who had converted to Islam about one year previously. The conversion it was stated,

“had been carried out according to the proper procedure, the convert appeared before the council where all the leaders of the religious communities (*rüesayn millet*) were present. The council then delayed deliberations and he was asked repeatedly if he was acting of his own free will.” Aleksı replied in the affirmative and took the name of Ahmed.²⁸

One year later Ahmed/Aleksı once again appeared before the Council declaring that he had reverted to Christianity. When questioned by the Council he declared, “I had then become a Muslim, but I remained hungry and naked, and could find no bread, now I want to go back to my old religion.” The council repeatedly tried to convince him that what he was doing was a bad idea:

“We tried several times to convince him, but he insisted I am Christian not Muslim. The ruling of the Sharia for such cases is well known. However, in order to avoid loose talk, the Imperial order of 16 Şevval has specified that all those Christians converting to Islam should be questioned first in their localities and then by the *kaza* councils. We beg to be informed if there is a similar regulation dealing with those who first accept Islam then become apostates.”²⁹

Several points stand out. First, Aleksı hoped to improve his lot in life by converting, and was disillusioned, deciding that if he were to be poor he would prefer to be a poor Christian. Second, the council admitted that the Sharia ruled in favor of execution but were also aware that this was not really feasible or desirable, hence the call for instructions which could pro-

vide a way out of their dilemma. Third, the document specified that the conversion procedure was to be carried out in accordance with specific government regulations. Fourth, the reference to “loose talk,” or more specifically “the wagging of tongues” (*kil-u kal*) refers almost certainly to meddling foreigners.

Sometimes people converted from somewhat pedestrian motivations. This was the case of a certain French doctor, Monsieur Merlot, who converted and took the name of Murad Efendi in 1852. Having incurred rather large gambling debts while serving as an Ottoman government doctor in Erzurum in eastern Anatolia, he presented himself in Istanbul, declaring that he had become a Muslim. The Porte was somewhat embarrassed because his creditors, who were French citizens, were applying pressure through the French Embassy. In the end it was decided that he be accepted as a Muslim and given another posting, the caveat being that a certain percentage of his salary was to be withheld at source and handed over to the French consulate in Erzurum.³⁰ A similar case was that of Agob, an Armenian medical student who expressed the desire to convert. The directorate of the Imperial Medical School was directed to ascertain whether Agob had any debts.³¹

Straightforward material gain is given as the motive for conversion of a Jew, a certain Hidayet, who appears in the memoirs of a well-known Young Turk, Eşref Kuşcubaşı. Kuşcubaşı met Hidayet when he was a prisoner of war in Egypt in 1917. His account of the encounter is worth quoting at length:

“According to my detailed investigations, this truant from the synagogue (*havra kaçgını*) was originally a Gelibolu Jew who entered the service of someone from the Palace and converted at the age of fifteen or sixteen. He then studied at the veterinary school in Istanbul. Meanwhile Freedom was declared [The Young Turk Revolution of 1908. S.D]. At this point Hidayet interpreted national freedom as religious freedom and unsuccessfully tried to reconvert back to Judaism. At some point Hidayet decided that his conversion was sincere. No doubt bearing in mind the possibilities of promotion and profit, but maybe also as a result of his uneasy conscience over his treachery to Moses as well as his treason to Muhammad (*Hız. Musa’ya kancıklık ve Hız. Muhammed’e kahpelik*), as well as a desire for God’s forgiveness, or even simply a desire to clean up his filth before the public, he went on the *haj*, ascended Arafat and prayed at the Prophet’s tomb. But even in the Holy Places he was unable to repress his true nature, buying rugs and other goods from needy pilgrims at scandalously low prices....”³²

Just what was the procedure involved in the process of conversion and in the event of apostasy? We derive some idea of the details in a case in

Edremid on the Anatolian Aegean coast. A certain "Kirman son of Yanko," actually from the island of Mytilini who was a guest in the town of Edremit, claimed to have converted to Islam: "When questioned in the Kadı's court the said convert pronounced the sacred formula and declared, 'yes I am leaving the false religion (*din-i batıl*) and accepting the True Faith, amen.' He was given the name of Mehmed. However, some eight days later he appeared again before us declaring, 'yes I had then pronounced those words, but I spoke them in jest as a joke (*latife ve ma'sşukaten*)'. He was given ample opportunity to repent, but insisted in his apostasy." The court pointed out that, "in accordance with the rulings of the Sharia, the above mentioned apostate was imprisoned, and sent off to Istanbul."³³

What is worth noting in this case is the pronouncement "I spoke in jest" which was a standard formula employed when the apostate strove to escape the consequences of his act, together with pleas of temporary insanity. The other interesting aspect of the episode is that the Sharia court's ruling ordered nothing worse than the imprisonment of the culprit. The court also pointed out that they had been ordered to send the offender to Istanbul. As in other similar cases by this date, the chances are that Kirman would "get lost" or "escape" somewhere along the line.

In some of the cases it seems that a veritable "tug-o-war" took place over the religious loyalties of converts/apostates. On March 8, 1853 it was reported from the kaza of Tekirdag in Thrace that a certain young woman named Agasi had accepted Islam and had been taken into the household of the *kadı's* deputy (*naib*). The woman's husband, together with other Christians, contested the conversion and had Agasi brought before the local council where she denied having converted, claiming she was abducted. She was then given into the charge of the representative of the Greek Metropolitan and for some twenty days she was kept in the house of the local Greek headman (*kocabası*). This time, however, the Muslim population abducted her and placed her with a Muslim household. The matter went up as high as the Patriarchate in Istanbul, who requested that the girl be brought to Istanbul for questioning.³⁴

THE HAMIDIAN PERIOD 1876–1909.

THE 'CORRECTION OF THE BELIEFS' OF MUSLIMS AND MARGINALS

In the reign of Abdülhamid II the official ideology of the state became much more Islamic, with the emphasis on the sultan's position as the Caliph, the spiritual and temporal leader of all Muslims. Also it is possible to speak of a "new orthodoxy" as the sultan and his regime put hitherto unprecedented stress on the Hanefi *mezheb* as the official *mezheb* of the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ The Hamidian regime also stands out from the Tanzimat period in the sense that, perhaps for the first time, active, militant missionary work was carried out in the name of the sultan.

It became the practice in Abdülhamid's reign for the corps of religious teachers to be used as a sort of religious secret police-cum-missionary organization whose religious training and credentials would be determined by the center. 'Freelance' preaching was decidedly frowned upon and seen as dangerous. These missionaries were in fact to be modeled on the Protestant missionaries who were seen as deeply pious, diligent and militant. These would be given the duty of the 'correction of the beliefs' (*tashihi akaid*) of the Muslim population. By 1892 it was established that preachers and 'missionaries' (*da'iyan*) would only be allowed to preach after they had graduated from four years of study and received a diploma (*rü'us*) from the *Şeyhulislam*. The preachers in question were to include the sons of prominent religious functionaries (*zadegan*) who, upon the successful completion of their studies, would be given the highest diploma. It would appear that this policy was implemented throughout the Hamidian era.³⁶

The enforcement of orthodoxy went together with conversion of heresy. Even elements that were nominally Muslim were not beyond the searching gaze of Istanbul. On December 2, 1884 the Council of Ministers, acting on the sultan's orders, arranged to send twenty religious teachers to the vilayet of Syria, to inculcate the 'true' Islam to the local population. This was deemed necessary as, "the Islam of the local population, sedentary and nomad alike, consists of nothing more than something they inherited from their ancestors, indeed, their Islam does not go much beyond their having Islamic names."³⁷

This practice was to continue to the end of the century and well into the 1900s. On 20 July, 1899 the Yıldız Palace recorded that an imperial order had been issued for the sending of twelve qualified teachers to the Ma'an valley in the southern part of the vilayet of Syria, to work among the Bedouin. It was declared that this was necessary because "these people are entirely bereft of the light of Islam, and have to be taught the religious sciences and the rules of Islam."³⁸ It is particularly interesting, in the light of this order, that when the Bedouin of the Karak region in the Ma'an valley revolted against the Ottomans in 1911, they selectively targeted the Hanefi schools and mosques for destruction, leaving such obvious targets as the Christian and Jewish quarters relatively undamaged.³⁹

It would appear that something of a religious crisis occurred in Anatolia at this time. In the late 1890s there was a very real fear that in many areas the population might convert to Christianity as a result of missionary activity. As it turned out this was a totally unfounded panic. But the question greatly worried Ottoman officials at the time because in many of these areas the people had converted from Christianity in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. The crisis also intermeshed with the Armenian massacres that brought intense pressure from the West for the Ottoman government to fulfil its pledges of reform.⁴⁰

On November 2, 1893 the commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army,

Zeki Paşa reported that a certain Osman Yakup had been “maliciously be-guiled” by the Armenians into converting to Christianity.⁴¹ He had been lured away from Islam by the promise of marriage to a pretty Armenian girl from the village of Pur, in the Bitlis Province. During the interrogation of the said Osman he had revealed that he was in fact a deserter from the 23rd cavalry brigade in Muş:

“After his desertion he came to Bitlis where he was approached by some Armenians who appealed to his lower nature by proposing that, if he converted to the Armenian faith, they would give him forty *liras* and marry him to an Armenian girl. Then he was taken to the village of Pur, where he saw the girl, in whom he developed a most vivid interest (*alaka-i şedide*). There-upon he accepted their offer, was taken to the nearby church with the girl, where he converted to Christianity according to the Armenian rites, was married to the girl, and took the name of Mıgırdıç.”

At this point the matter had come to the attention of the military authorities that went to Pur there finding him in the company of his wife, and arrested him. During his interrogation he testified to the following:

“He confessed that he had been converted to Christianity according to the Armenian faith. The Armenians then told him that he would in appearance remain a Muslim and continue to serve in the Ottoman army. He was then taken to the Armenian Catholics in Van, together with his wife, and his apostasy was also recorded there. He was told he would first be taken to Revan, in Russia, where he would be given instructions by a person named Maprov Nerchalet who would then arrange for his transfer to a brigade in Istanbul through the good offices of a highly placed Armenian resident in the capital.”

Osman also testified that there were some twenty others like him, all deserters from the army. He had been told that they too had been converted “through money and other means” and placed in military units in Istanbul.⁴² What can be drawn from the document above? Osman does indeed appear to be a *bona fide* apostate, and did not deny that he had been tempted with the offer of marriage. The Ottoman forces in eastern Anatolia did have a serious defection problem. One must also bear in mind that the Russian frontier at this time extended to Kars and Ardahan and was very porous. It is highly unlikely that a simple cavalry soldier could make up the complicated and convoluted story he told. Also, the great ease with which Osman converted to the Gregorian faith seems to be a transposition into the Christian setting of the simplicity of conversion to Islam. We may therefore surmise that somebody concocted the above scenario with a view to convincing the sultan that a serious plot was afoot among the Armenians.

The Armenian crisis in Anatolia provided the background for many of the cases of conversion to Islam. The debate has raged around the question of whether these were voluntary or forced.⁴³ On March 3, 1895 it was reported that a sizeable population (some 200 households) of Armenians had converted to Islam in Birecik, in south-east Anatolia. This occurred at the height of the Armenian crisis, so the British and Russian embassies became involved in the matter.⁴⁴ The Ottoman government had therefore consented to send a mixed commission to the area, consisting of two officials from the vilayet of Aleppo, and the dragoman of the British Embassy, Fitzmaurice. The commission had interviewed leaders of the convert community who were named as "ex-Gregorian Haçik Efendi, now called Mehmet Şakir Efendi, and Abos Efendi, now called Şeyh Müslim Efendi, ex-Catholic Hacıbekuzan Efendi, now called İbrahim Efendi." The leaders of the community openly stated that, "the recent events had caused them to fear for their lives, and that was why they became Muslim." They also promised that they would not convert back to Christianity once the danger was over: Also, "the conversion of the church which they had made into a mosque was done entirely at their own expense, and they had no intention whatever of converting it back to a church." The Armenians interviewed were then asked to sign a report written by the commission. The report recorded that, "the community had not been subjected to any pressure or force in accepting Islam but had only acted out of fear of recent events, being obviously in a state of great distress and poverty after the recent calamities and the sacking of their property." On May 28, the Vali of Aleppo was asked his opinion on the matter. The Ottoman governor reiterated that the Armenian converts had converted "only because they feared for their lives" (*sırf muhafaza-i hayat maksadına müsteniddir*). He pointed out that the state had two options. If it wanted to allow the Armenians to remain where they were, and revert to Christianity, it was necessary to "execute some of those Muslims who had taken part in the killing and looting, in order to frighten the [rest of the population]." This would only work, however, for the urban areas. Those in the countryside would still not be able to circulate among the Kurdish tribes who were their neighbors, "which is in fact the very reason for their insistence on the sincerity of their conversion." The second option was to move the converts somewhere far from Birecik, so that when they re-converted back to Christianity, their Muslim neighbors would not know that they were apostates.⁴⁵

Another aspect of the religious crisis in Anatolia at this time involved people who were crypto-Christians, who felt, at some point, that this was a propitious time to openly declare their faith.

After the Ottomans officially admitted freedom of religion with the *ferman* of 1856, there were indeed cases among recent converts who attempted to return to Christianity. A striking example is that of the Istavri or the Stavriotae. The Istavri were Greeks of the Black Sea regions of Trabzon

and Gümüşhane who had converted to Islam at various periods of persecution since the end of the seventeenth century, but had remained crypto-Christians, openly declaring their faith only after the guarantee of religious freedom granted by the Hat-i Humayun Reform Edict of 1856.⁴⁶ Some had resettled in the *kaza* of Akdag Madeni near the central Anatolian town of Yozgad in the 1830s. Şakir Paşa, the Inspector of Eastern Anatolia, referred to them as: “a people of two cults” (*iki ayin icra eder ahali*) and as such, they were highly anomalous in the Ottoman system. In earlier more tolerant periods they had been ignored, but now, in a period of religious crisis, they became the focus of the unwelcome attention of the state.⁴⁷ They amounted to a considerable population numbering some “eighty four households” in Akdag Madeni itself, and were also to be found in the surrounding villages amounting to a total of some one hundred and forty households. They had taken Muslim names and completed military service, and their community leaders had maintained contact with the Greek Patriarchate in Trabzon, to the point where one of them, a Mahmud Efendi, was clandestinely referred to as “the representative of the patriarch.” In 1879 they had openly applied to return to Christianity, thus becoming exempt from military service; but permission had been denied, causing Şakir Paşa to remark, “this then led them into devilish machinations” (*bir mecrayn Şeytaniye süluk ile*).⁴⁸ These “machinations” consisted of refusing to register their births, deaths and marriages in the population registers, and burying their dead in the Greek cemeteries. They had also taken to openly giving their children Christian names, and marrying into the Greek community. Şakir Paşa felt that all this was very dangerous as “such an example can cause confusion in the minds of other simple Muslims” meaning, perhaps, that they too might be tempted to come up with a similar story. Yet the inspector general of Anatolia recommended nothing worse than the temporary exile of the community leaders and the reprimanding of the Patriarch of Trabzon. He added “reliable imams should be sent to their villages, they should be severely adjoined to send their children to school and give them Muslim names.”⁴⁹

However, it appears that the Istavri continued in their errant ways, and were to become something of a personal obsession for Ahmed Şakir Paşa. More than a year after his visit to Akdag Madeni, he still wrote lengthy reports on “this heretical people.” He pointed out that although they were relatively few in the region of Yozgad, in the area from which they originally came, the *kaza* of Turul in Gümüşhane, they were equal in number to the population of an entire township. Their hope was to avoid military service and “procure the friendship and protection of Europe.”⁵⁰ Instructions had been given to the authorities in the area that “they be told that the only result of their changing religion would be that they would be cursed by their neighbors,” and would still not be exempted from military service. The Paşa noted that it was a waste of time to try to preach to those “whose minds

were already poisoned,” but the target should be their children, “whose beliefs should be corrected (*tashih-i akaid*).” The Paşa’s methods for forcing the parents to send their children to school were somewhat insidious and smacked of blackmail:

“On the face of it the ostensible reason is that their children should be educated. If the [parents] persist in returning to Christianity, they should be told in an unofficial manner that their [older] children liable for military service will be compelled to serve in the military units of Yemen, Trablus (Libya), and Hejaz. This method is sure to do away with any such inclination and they will become as zealous in their beliefs as the Pomaks of Bulgaria.”⁵¹

THE GENERAL POLICY TOWARDS THE CONVERSION OF CHRISTIANS TO ISLAM IN THE HAMIDIAN ERA

The process of conversion from Christianity to Islam is one of the most vexed issues in Ottoman studies. It seems from the evidence that forced and arbitrary conversion was officially scorned, while it probably went on informally. Even according to an unsympathetic Western account:

“Under the Ottoman Turks at least there is very little historical evidence of conversion on a large scale in Asia Minor. So long as the rayahs were not dangerous, they could be ‘milked’ better than true believers, and conversion en masse was to no one’s interest.”⁵²

However, the evidence from the Ottoman archives indicates that Christian conversion did become more frequent during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Indeed it is possible to speak of a late Ottoman conversion policy regarding Christians, the basis of which was that conversion was only admissible if carried out through “proper channels” and followed “proper procedure.” As seen in the earlier Tanzimat period discussed above, what we have here is a bureaucratization of the conversion procedure. This procedure is spelled out clearly in the Ministry of Interior’s frequent circulars to the provinces dealing with complaints about conversions (*ihtida*) which had taken place “against accepted practice” (*usul-u cariyeh ilafında*). The central idea informing decision-making on this issue was to show that the conversions had been voluntary.

It also became accepted practice to announce the conversions in the press in special columns marked “conversion” (*ihtida*) very like an obituary column. Below is a typical example:

“Kevork Efendi, a member of the Armenian millet and a notable of Diyar-bekir, has made it known that he has been honored by accepting Islam. He has duly presented a petition to the governorate for the application of

the Şeriat procedures. When questioned according to accepted procedure he firmly said I have presented this petition with complete freedom of conscience and because my conversion is the result of divine salvation. The above mentioned is a person of considerable wealth, of some sixty years of age, sound of mind and body and is in no way needy or destitute. Therefore his petition was accepted and he was offered the faith. According to his own wish he took the name of Ali."⁵³

The accepted practices had some striking features. One of these was that, "during the act of conversion the highest-ranking local priest belonging to the confession of the convert [has] to be present" presumably to strike the convert off his list. Together with the priest, the convert's parents or next of kin should also be in attendance. The documents testifying to the act of legitimate conversion were to be signed and sealed by Muslim and Christian officials alike. The procedure should not be hurried, and if a few days delay was required for the priest or the next of kin to arrive, the conversion ceremony was to be put off. Only those children who had reached the age of puberty were allowed to convert. Also, in the case of girls who came to the ceremony veiled, "the veil should be lifted to ascertain identity." If the convert was above the age of puberty, they should not be forced to go back to the home of their parents, and should be settled in "suitable Christian or Muslim homes."⁵⁴ The careful legalese of the documents can, however, be read in another way. The circular instructions sent out to the provinces often repeat the same thing: frequent cases of illegal conversion were being reported in the Greek and Armenian communities. The Greek Patriarchate frequently complained that members of its congregation had approached it with tales of woe involving underage children converting as a result of being abducted. The abduction of young girls seems to have been particularly rife. The legal advisors of the Porte were to note that, "often these children are kept in the imam's house where they are made promises that if they encourage others like them [to convert] this will be in their interest." What seem to have been happening was that convert children were being used as decoys for others to follow in their footsteps. This was seen as truly reprehensible behavior and the legal advisors bemoaned the fact that provincial administrators were lax in the punishment of those who abducted young girls. It was also seen as reprehensible that in the case of children who were under age, "these children are hurried off to Istanbul and this causes loose talk and complaints."⁵⁵

Another problem was the case of separated parents. If one of the parents accepted Islam the children would be free to choose which religion they were to belong to after the age of fifteen, "according to the usage of the past forty years."⁵⁶

In the matter of deciding the age of young converts a clash occurred

between the Greek Patriarchate and the Ottoman authorities. The Patriarchate demanded that the baptism certificates should be the basis of determining whether the convert was of age, whereas the Ottoman authorities maintained that the legal basis for such procedures should be Ottoman birth certificates.⁵⁷

In examining Ottoman conversion policy and ideological control in the Hamidian era, the interesting aspect of this rather murky story is precisely what the documents do *not* tell us. Very often, the constant repetition of orders “not to do something” are a fairly clear indication that the undesirable act was being committed. But on the other hand, was it really undesirable? After the Ottomans had to officially allow Christian missionary activity, this led to genuine fear among the Ottoman ruling classes that the religious base of state legitimization ideology was slipping from under them. Ahmed Sakir Pasha was to state unequivocally that:

“As the basis of power [of the state] is the Muslim population, the power of the state will increase in proportion to the number of its Muslim subjects ... Therefore we must do our utmost to prevent...defection.”⁵⁸

The evident desire of the Ottoman center was to stabilize the religious-ethnic status quo. There was nothing new in this policy. What was particular to the times was the constant affirmation and re-affirmation of what should have been the norm anyway. In this context the impression derived from the documentary evidence is one of worry-cum-panic among the administrators. An imperial order, dated 1 August 1897, reflects this attitude quite clearly as it provides for the constitution of a mixed commission whose specific brief was

“to prevent the spread of the influence of foreigners and to ensure that each remains in his own confession, and to prevent the conversion of His Imperial Majesty’s subjects to Protestantism as well as other foreign creeds.”

The commission was to be made up of three Muslim officials, (one each from the Şeyhulislam’s office, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of the Interior), two Armenians, and one Greek Orthodox.⁵⁹

In the event, Muslim conversion or re-conversion to Christianity remained minimal, but this was not something that could have been taken for granted at the time. A memorandum prepared by the sultan for Ahmed Şakir Pasha reflected this state of mind: “Although the Sublime State cannot force anyone to accept Islam, we can never tolerate the conversion of Muslims to Christianity.”⁶⁰

CONVERSION IN THE OTTOMAN AND RUSSIAN EMPIRES:
A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

In both the Ottoman and Russian cases religious conversion through the 18th and 19th centuries occupied center-stage in the two polities. Yet the political dynamics in both polities worked in opposite directions. The Russian "frontier" was expanding into the Don–Volga, Caucasus and Central Asian zones, whereas the Ottoman Empire had been on the defensive in the Balkans from at least the end of the 18th century, which caused an increased awareness of itself as a Muslim state under siege. This, in turn, intensified Islamization in the Balkans as refugee populations flooded in.⁶¹ As the Russian Empire muscled into the hitherto Muslim zone in the south, Peter the Great was actually taken to task by Ivan Pososhkov for his "feeble missionary efforts of the Russians [contrasted] with the Roman Catholic Church."⁶²

In both the Russian and the Ottoman cases, we see dialectic between tolerance and an increase of pressure to convert. Moreover, both the Ottomans and the Russians confronted many of the same problems when it came to incorporating heterodox elements. In both polities, marginal peoples who had been hitherto left to their own devices were subjected, in the 19th century, to state pressure to convert to the official faith.⁶³ Russia was a relative latecomer to state supported conversion policies, and it was only after Peter the Great that converting non-Christians became a matter of state policy.⁶⁴ Although Russian conversion campaigns were as much targeted against pagans as Muslims, as the post-Petrine state expanded into the Tatar and other Muslim zones, it acquired something of a crusading character. This reached its peak with the creation of The Agency of Convert Affairs, which functioned from 1740 to 1760. The intense policy of forcible conversion carried out by this agency was, however, a failure: "The excessive force used by the Agency of Convert Affairs, the mutual complaints of the church officials and the converts, and the large but nominal character of conversion made it clear that missionary work in Russia in the middle of the eighteenth century was flawed."⁶⁵ The official conversion policy was also very brutal, particularly after the appointment of Archbishop Luka Konasevic in 1738:

"Methods of extreme brutality were brought to bear: massive destruction of mosques, the kidnapping of Muslim children baptized by force and shut up in schools for converts, even the forced baptism of adults...the death penalty for Muslim missionaries."⁶⁶

From this time onwards, there was to be a large crypto-Muslim population in the Volga region. When state pressure lifted, these people would periodically apostatize and return to Islam. In periods of relative liberalism such as that of Catherine the Great, emphasis on voluntary conversion be-

came the state policy, followed by a new crack down in the nineteenth century. In 1827, several thousands of converted Tatars petitioned the Tsar to allow them to return to Islam in what was “the first massive wave of apostasy.”⁶⁷

It is instructive to compare the Russian and Ottoman cases because in some ways the methods used are tantalizingly familiar, yet there are striking differences. In both polities, at various dates, conversion could lead to an amnesty for previous “crimes.” In both, the “carrot method” included tax exemption, exemption from military service, gifts of money and clothing. In both polities the physical displacement of the new converts was practiced as a means of distancing them from their previous community. In both Russia and in the Ottoman Empire the conversion of the previous aristocracies was a gradual process that took place over several generations. In Russia, nobles ranging from, “Chinggisid princes from Siberia to the Crimea, non-Chinggisid Tatar nobles of the Kazan region, Kabardian nobles and the Imeritian ruling dynasty from the Caucasus, Nogay and Kalmyk chiefs from the Volga steppes—all at different times and for different reasons—chose to convert to Christianity. Assimilation was complete when a dynasty entered the Genealogical Book of the Russian nobility.”⁶⁸ Thus both polities showed a remarkable capacity for integrating previous elite in which “conversion meant a fast track to assimilation.”⁶⁹ In Russia, the spread of Orthodoxy remained a state project:

“The single most striking feature of Russian missionary activity remains the unusual degree of government involvement. In a country in which the church was firmly wedded to the state, religious conversion was seen and used by the government as a tool of state colonial policies.”⁷⁰

In both post-Petrine Russia, with the creation of the Holy Synod in 1721, and in the post-Mahmudian Ottoman Empire (1839 onwards) with the incorporation of the Şeyhulislam into the government machinery, this position eventually becoming a Cabinet post, the highest of religious offices became entirely subordinate to temporal power.⁷¹ In both polities therefore it is possible to refer to an “institutionalizing [of] piety.”⁷² Yet it is here that the major difference comes out. In matters of conversion, (forced or voluntary) mass conversion was never an *official policy* of the Ottoman State for the population at large. Although large scale Islamization did take place in some areas in the Balkans in the centuries following the Ottoman conquest, it proceeded slowly, and until the tightening of the borders between the *millets* due to the influence of nationalism in the nineteenth century. The convert often kept contact with his/her previous community. As succinctly put by Michel Balivet: “As to Islamization ‘à l’ottomane,’ it is certainly not a case of religious or even cultural uniformity, most of the converts kept a part of their past heritage.”⁷³ The recent major study by

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak on heresy in the Ottoman Empire in the 15th–17th centuries is also very clear on this point: “The Ottoman Empire never considered the official religion as a belief that was to be imposed on its non-Muslim subjects, and it never carried out any activity in this regard.”⁷⁴

In fact Michael Khodarkovsky’s definition of the dynamics of conversion in Russia would work equally well for the Ottoman Empire:

“Religious conversion in Russia appears least of all religious and spiritual and involved only a nominal redefinition of religious identity...As in other pre-modern societies where religion defined not only religious life but also cultural, social and political norms, conversion in Russia was first and foremost a process of cultural transformation.”⁷⁵

In other words, the Ottoman Empire never had an “Agency for Convert Affairs,” and, by contrast, the job of the bureaucracy was to make sure that any conversion that was carried out be done decorously. It is only late in the Hamidian period (1876–1909) and the subsequent Young Turk period that this picture begins to change.⁷⁶ Parallel to the increasing emphasis on Orthodoxy, “The Russian Soul” and the shifting of the Imperial center of gravity to Moscow from Petersburg, during the reign of Alexander III, we see a very similar re-focusing on Islam and the Caliphate during the reign of his contemporary, Abdulhamid II.⁷⁷

During the earlier part of Sultan Abdulhamid’s reign, the possibility of Christian subjects serving in the ranks was seriously considered. A memorandum prepared by Grand Vizier Said Pasha, on 26 February 1880, pointed out that the Greek Metropolitan in Istanbul had suggested that Christians and Muslims serve in separate units. This was dismissed as dangerous by the Council of Ministers who pointed out that “in the Cossack and Dragoon units [of Russia] Christian and Muslim serve together in brotherly fashion.”⁷⁸ The sultan, however, became increasingly suspicious of arming his Christian subjects, on the grounds of security and also because the inclusion of Christians in the ranks would mean the loss of the considerable revenue gained from the military exemption tax (*bedel-i askeri*) levied on them.

The late 19th century Ottoman was very much the “White Man,” the only difference was that he was a Muslim White Man bearing his Burden under a *fez* rather than a pith helmet.

NOTES

1 V. Aksan, “Locating the Ottomans Among the Early Modern Empires,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 3 (1999): 1–32

2 İ. Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun en Uzun Yüzyılı* (Istanbul, 1983).

- 3 Considerable literature exists on this period. For the "classic" account see, B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).
- 4 *Düstur, Tertib-i Evvel* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1329), 4–7. The actual wording states: "As there is nothing more precious in the world than security of life and honor, even a person who may not be naturally inclined towards sedition will doubtless seek other ways if these are threatened" (my translation). For the standard English translation of the Tanzimat Edict see, J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J: Van Nostrand, 1956), 113–116.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 151.
- 6 M.M.A Ubicini, *État Présent de L'Empire Ottoman* (Paris, 1876), 5–6. "Among the provisions of the Edict relating to religious matters one must note the abolition of the law, very rarely brought to bear, it is true, of the execution of apostates." My translation.
- 7 For the case of nineteenth century Nablus see B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine. Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus 1700–1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), 23: "[In Nablus in the early nineteenth century] most of the Christians were Greek Orthodox. The rest became Protestants around the mid-nineteenth century in response to the evangelical activities of...the Church Missionary Society". Another major aspect of conversion was conversion within Islam, from Shia to Sunni or vice-versa. That aspect of the conversion process is being deliberately excluded here. On that issue see, S. Deringil, "The Struggle against Shi'ism in Hamidian Iraq," *Die Welt des Islams* 30 (1990): 45–62.
- 8 See *Düstur*, 10. Also see, I. H. Danişmend, *Izahl Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, vol. 4 (Ankara, 1955), 175. In fact the Edict of 1856 was received by the Christian communities with mixed feelings because it brought mixed blessings such as military service for non-Muslims, the payment of regular salaries to religious functionaries, making it illegal for them to "milk" their communities, presence of laymen on millet councils and so on. On this aspect see, I.H. Danismend, *op. cit.*, 176.
- 9 J. Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism, and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878–1896* (London, England; Portland, Or.: F. Cass, 1993), 37.
- 10 *Başbakanlık Arşivi* (Prime Ministry Archives) Istanbul, hereafter cited as BBA. *Hariciye Mektubi* (Foreign Ministry Correspondence), hereafter HR.MKT 1/53 (10, Muharrem, 1260/31 January 1844). The archival citations and abbreviations used are the official catalogue entries as published in the Archive Catalogue, the *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Kılavuzu*. Because of the nature of the archival catalogues (lack of indexing etc.) it is difficult to give precise figures on the number of cases dealing with conversion and/or apostasy in the late nineteenth century. My feeling is that they run into the hundreds. It will become more possible to give figures as the research progresses.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 BBA HR.MKT 49/95 the only date is 1268 (1851).
- 14 *Düstur*, 8–9.
- 15 *Ibid.* In fact they made reference to an incident in the past when some one hundred people from the town of Arhavi had crossed over to Russia and not returned. On just how porous the borders in the region were, see: Thomas M. Barret, "Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the Northern Caucasus", in J. Burbank and D. Ransel, eds., *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 48–173.

- 16 *BBA HR.MKT* 49/36 (13 Eylül 1852/ 28 Zilkade 1268). *Ministry of Interior to Vali of Ioannina*.
- 17 *BBA HR.MKT* 54/42 (30 Rebiyulevvel 1269/12 January 1853). *Sublime Porte to the Mutasarrıf of Işkodra*.
- 18 *BBA HR.MKT* 47/81 (26 Şevval 1268/13 August 1852). *Sublime Porte to the Vali of Yanina*.
- 19 *BBA Dahiliye Nezareti Hukuk Müşavirliği* (DH-HMS) 13/47; 23 Haziran 1320/6 (July 1904). General no.: 244. File Number 62570 (Ministry of the Interior. Legal Advisors Bureau). In the catalogue of the documents of the Ministry of the Interior Legal Advisors Bureau there is a special category entitled, *ihida*, "conversion". Although the regulations cited above date from 1904, they are the updated formulations of earlier practices.
- 20 O. Çetin, *Sicillere Göre Bursa'da İhtida Hareketleri ve Sosyal Sonuçları 1472-1492* (Ankara, 1994), 3-5.
- 21 *BBA HR.MKT* 3/65 (16 Rebiyülahir 1260/5 May 1840) *Foreign Ministry to Commanders of Akka and Sayda*.
- 22 Ibid. The phrase used is "arz-" *İslamiyet*'le *ibram ve ilhah*".
- 23 *BBA İrade Dahiliye* (4627 17 Şevval 1260/30 October 1844).
- 24 *BBA HR: MKT* 53/7 (Selh-i Muharrem 1269; 31 October 1852). *Enclosing letter from Armenian Patriarch*.
- 25 *BBA HR.MKT* 6/48 (6 Şaban 1260/21 August 1844). *Instructions to the Kaimakam of Niş*.
- 26 *BBA HR.MKT*; 4/10; Gurre-i Cemaziyelahir 1260/18 June 1844. *Sublime Porte to the Muşir of Thessaloniki*.
- 27 *BBA HR.MKT* 63/96; 9 Şevval 1269/17 July 1853. *Memorandum of the Administrative Council of the Kaza of Bandırma*.
- 28 *BBA HR.MKT* 41/93; 5 Ramazan 1268/23 June 1852. *Administrative Council of the kaza of Golos to Sublime Porte*.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 *BBA HR.MKT* 49/70; 2 Cemaziyelahir 1268/ 24 March 1852 *Vali of Erzurum to Sublime Porte*; *HR.MKT* 54/86; 6 Ramazan 1269/17 January 1853. *Sublime Porte to Vali of Erzurum*.
- 31 *BBA HR.MKT* 54/56; 30 Rebiyulevvel 1269/12 January 1853. *Sublime Porte to Director of Imperial Medical School*.
- 32 E. Kuşçubaşı, *Hayber'de Türk Cengi* (İstanbul, 1997). Eşref Kuşçubaşı was a notorious hit-man of the Committee of Union and Progress (*fedayi*) and one of the founders of the Young Turk Intelligence Organization, the *Teşkilatı Mahsusa*. His account reflects very much the anti-Semitic prejudices common among some of these men. Hidayet is a name often indicating that the person is a convert, meaning "the right way or the way to Islam."
- 33 *BBA HR.MKT* 50/63; 8 Zilhicce 1269/12 September 1853. *Memorandum from Kadı Court of Edremid, signed and sealed by all those present*.
- 34 *BBA HR.MKT* 56/65; 26 Cemaziyevvel 1269/8 March 1853. *Request from the Greek Patriarchate*.
- 35 On this see my, *The Well Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris; 1998).
- 36 *BBA Y.Mtv* 65/33, 9 Muharrem 1310/3 August 1892. Şeyhülislam Cemaleddin Efendi to Yıldız Palace.
- 37 *BBA Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları MVM* (Minutes of the meetings of the Council of Ministers). 96/1, 96/2 12 Safer 1302/1 December 1884.
- 38 *BBA Y.Mtv* 92/127, 17 Temmuz 1315/20 July 1899. Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat.

- 39 On Ottoman missionary activity in the Transjordan and the Bedouin reaction see, E. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Ottoman Empire. Transjordan 1850–1920* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 197–201.
- 40 R. G. Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in modern* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); V. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: ethnic conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003); T. Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni* (Istanbul, 1999).
- 41 BBA Y. Mtv 86/72 20 Teşrin-i Evvel 1309/2 November 1893. Cipher telegram from Zeki Paşa Commander of the Fourth Army in Erzincan to General Staff.
- 42 Ibid., Imperial order (İrade) dated 1 Zilkade 1311.
- 43 V. Dadrian, op. cit., 156.
- 44 For a more detailed discussion of this episode see, S. Deringil, op. cit., 68–92.
- 45 Ibid., 88.
- 46 A. A. Bryer, *The Empire of Trebizond and Pontos* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), 268–72.
- 47 BBAYEE A/24–X/24/132 Inspector of Eastern Anatolia, Şakir Paşa to the Vilayet of Ankara. 11 Ağustos 1313/23 August 1897.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 BBAYEE 31/76–45/76/81 6 Şaban 1316/20 December 1898.
- 51 Ibid. Yemen, Libya and Hejaz were infamous sinkholes of military force. The Pomaks were a Slavic people who had converted to Islam and became renowned for their zeal.
- 52 F.M. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1929), 469. The term used here should be “*reaya*” meaning tax- paying subject.
- 53 *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* no 3028 14 Zilkade 1305 p 3.
- 54 BBA Dahiliye Nezareti, *Hukuk Müşavirliği* (Ministry of Interior. Legal Advisors Bureau) (DH–HMŞ) In the catalogue of the documents of the Ministry of Interior Legal Advisors Bureau there is a separate category entitled “Conversion” (*İhtida*).
- 55 BBA DH–HMŞ 13/46 8 Rebiyülahir 1312 / 9 October 1903 Ministry of Interior circular no. 110.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 DH–HMŞ 13/47.
- 58 BBAYEE 31/76–45/76/81
- 59 BBA İrade Hususi 123, 3 Rebiyülahir 1315 / 1 August 1897. Yıldız Palace Imperial Secretariat.
- 60 BBAYEE A–24/X/24132; 28 Kanun-u Evvel 1314/11 January 1898.
- 61 V. Aksan, “Locating the Ottomans among the Early Modern Empires,” *Journal of Early Modern History* (1999).
- 62 M. Khodarkovsky, “‘Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects’ Constructing Non-Christian Identities in Early Modern Russia” in D. R. Brower, J. Lazzarini, eds., *Russia’s Orient. Imperial Borderlands and Peoples 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 9–26.
- 63 For a few exemplary studies see P. Werth, “Armed Defiance and Biblical Appropriation: Assimilation and Transformation of Mordvin resistance 1740–1810,” *Nationalities Papers* 27 (1999): 33–45.
- 64 M. Khodarkovsky, “‘Not by Word Alone’: Missionary Policies and Religious Conversion in Early Modern Russia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996): 267–293.
- 65 Ibid., 287.

- 66 Ch. L. Quelquejay, "Les Missions Orthodoxes en Pays Musulmans de Moyenne-et Basse Volga 1552–1865" (Orthodox Missions in the Islamic Regions of the Lower Volga) *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 8:3 (1967): 369–403. My translation.
- 67 Ibid., 397. In fact the term *krjaseny*, convert, became synonymous with crypto-Muslim.
- 68 M. Khodarkovsky "Not by Word Alone," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996): 27.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid., 291.
- 71 On the office of the Şeyhülislam see: "Shaikh al Islam", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (London and Leiden, 1934), 275–279.
- 72 G. L. Freeze, "Institutionalizing Piety. The Church and Popular Religion 1750–1850" in J. Burbank, D. L. Ransel, eds., *Imperial Russia. New Histories for the Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 210–249.
- 73 M. Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine et Pays de Rum Turc* (Istanbul, 1994), 190–91.
- 74 A. Y. Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve* (Istanbul, 1998), 94.
- 75 M. Khodarkovsky, "Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects" in D. R. Brower, J. Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient*.
- 76 On the Hamidian conversion policy see, S. Deringil, op. cit., especially vol. 2, chapter 2, 445.
- 77 R. Wortman, "Moscow and Petersburg: The Problem of Political Center in Tsarist Russia 1881–1914" in S. Wilentz, ed., *Rites of Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 244–71.
- 78 *BBA Y.A RES* 5/38 14 Rebiyülevvel 1297/25 (February 1880) Grand Vizier Said Paşa to the Sultan.

3. CORE AND PERIPHERY

Empire on Europe's Periphery: Russian and Western Comparisons

DOMINIC LIEVEN

The aim of this paper is to compare Europe's main empires on the continent's western and eastern peripheries. Above all, this means a comparison between the Russian and British empires, though some reference is also made to Spain. In this paper I will make no reference to another useful comparison between empires of the European periphery, namely that between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. I have covered this angle elsewhere myself.¹ Moreover, it will be tackled by other contributors to this conference's papers. My own paper concentrates on what seem to me to be the core attributes of empire: on the one hand this means the management of space and multi-ethnicity; on the other hand, it entails power, and above all "hard power" in the international context.

To attach such over-riding significance to hard power when discussing past empires is unfashionable in contemporary Western academic circles. At present academic historians of empire are much more inclined to concentrate on questions of culture, epistemology, identity and race—for reasons linked to current trends in Western thinking and current issues in the domestic politics of Western states. As Linda Colley notes, however, it is naïve to imagine that these factors alone tell one all one needs to know about the emergence, survival and impact of empires.² Ironically, at a time when historians are tending to neglect the realities of power in their study of empire, international relations experts are having a belated conversion to the importance of the concept of empire because of their acute awareness precisely of American power and its implications for the contemporary global order.

Five-power domination of European inter-state relations emerged in the early eighteenth century and was established definitively by Prussia's survival and Russia's impressive military performance in the Seven Years War.³ It was consolidated, and to an extent institutionalized as the European concert, after the defeat of Napoleon and by the Congress of Vienna. Within the five-power concert Russia and Britain were the continent's peripheral powers. They played a key common role in ensuring that Europe remained a multi-power international system, rather than falling under the domination of a single imperial hegemon as was usually the case in East

Asian history and has been true of the western hemisphere ever since the United States emerged as a great power.

The five-power European system arrived partly as a result of the failure of earlier efforts by the Spanish Habsburgs and the French monarchy to establish hegemony in western and central Europe. For this paper the Spanish effort is more interesting because it depended in large part on the Habsburgs' ability to mobilize the resources of overseas empire to serve the cause of the domination of Europe by a military and dynastic empire linked in typical historical style to a universalist religion, in this case the Catholic counter-reformation. The great contrast in strategy between Spain and its main successor on the European Atlantic periphery was that the British never pursued a strategy of continental domination. Instead they concentrated on overseas hegemony, securing their position in Europe by a balance-of-power policy which in moments of crisis they supported by limited military intervention and, above all, by huge subsidies to continental allies made possible in part from the proceeds of trans-oceanic commercial hegemony and colonization.⁴

A basic point about European geopolitics between 1756 and 1945 was that it was difficult but possible for a single power to conquer and control the continent's "Carolingian core," namely France, German States and Italy. Napoleon and Hitler both achieved this. William II came close to doing so. Having got this far, however, the conqueror was confronted by two peripheral empires, Britain and Russia. To establish complete dominion in Europe these two empires must be defeated and subjugated. Quite apart from the conqueror's desire to establish undisputed hegemony throughout the continent, Britain and Russia were unlikely to tolerate his domination even of the Carolingian core. Left undisturbed they were almost certain to challenge this dominion, and probably to do so in alliance. This they did against Napoleon, William II and Hitler.

To penetrate and destroy the geopolitical core of British and Russian power was, however, an immensely difficult undertaking. Geography very much favored the peripheral powers. Britain was protected by the sea, Russia by the huge and desolate plains of eastern Poland and Byelorussia, and by the possibility of drawing an invader deep into her territory while still denying him control of the empire's core military and economic resources. It made things much worse that a would-be European hegemon required different forms of power to conquer the two peripheral empires. In the Russian case what was needed was a huge, mobile army with a logistical system capable of sustaining it in Russia's vast and inhospitable terrain. To defeat Britain required maritime power to outmatch the Royal Navy, whose strength was based in part on a massive merchant marine and a vastly wealthy commercial and financial worldwide network. In principle, of course, the obvious strategy was to establish continental hegemony and only then to challenge British maritime power. The British ruling elites

were fully aware of this danger, however, and always made it their business to throw their weight against any would-be continental hegemon. In the end, they were always likely to find powerful allies because, however much continental states might resent British maritime hegemony, it was less awful a threat than the danger of a rival power establishing hegemony in Europe and reducing them to powerless dependence.

Put this way, the European concert seems like a clockwork self-regulating machine. In reality things were inevitably never this simple or automatic. At times both peripheral powers were much inclined to concentrate on non-European concerns and to leave Europe to its own devices. A classic example of this was Russia's concentration on the Far East in 1896–1905, which resulted in de-stabilizing the European balance of power and making a considerable contribution to the coming of the First World War.⁵

Some contemporary British conservative historians regret that Britain opposed Germany's drive for European hegemony in the twentieth century, believing that it sacrificed its overseas empire and global power unnecessarily in this cause.⁶ Just exactly how and when the peripheral powers reacted depended in part whether the potential hegemon was France or Germany. In the French case the British were always likely to react first since France was their neighbor and any French expansion was likely to begin with the conquest of the Low Countries, whose independence from any great power was a fixed point in British grand strategy. Britain went to war with France in 1793. Russia did not join the war at all until 1798 and played an auxiliary role until 1806–1807, by which time French domination of central Europe had made clear the direct threat to Russian security.

When Germany became the potential hegemon, matters were more complicated. Situated in central Europe, she had a choice of striking east or west. Britain and Russia could both believe that German power posed no immediate threat to them, and indeed that it could be checked by the great powers in its path on Europe's other periphery. This is largely what happened, with fatal consequences, in the 1930s. But comparison of Russian policy before 1914 and 1939 shows that meeting the threat of potential German hegemony is not simple. Essentially Russia could either attempt to deter Germany in alliance with France and Britain, or it could seek to deflect her ambitions westwards in the belief that the French and British would check Germany, in the process benefiting Russia, whose relative power could only grow as all its rivals exhausted each other in a long-drawn-out war for west European and maritime hegemony. Before 1914 the tsarist regime opted for deterrence. In 1939 Stalin chose deflection. Both were reasonable strategies in the context of the time. Both ended in disaster.⁷

It is not at all a coincidence that Europe's peripheral powers became its greatest empires. From the seventeenth century European power grew first slowly, and then with the Industrial Revolution very rapidly, relative to that of non-European states. The European powers best placed to project

that power beyond the continent were inevitably the peripheral states. In any conflict, Britain's position across Dutch and German maritime communications with the non-European world gave it huge advantages. When France or Spain were enemies, Britain's geographical position was less dominant. On the other hand, unlike them, she could concentrate on maritime power, without needing to create great armies in the French manner to defend land frontiers. The only time in the long century of Anglo-French competition for overseas empire when France was victorious was in 1778–83. Uniquely in that war France could concentrate on naval power since the continent was at peace, while Britain by contrast was committed to a major land war to regain the north American continent. In more normal times, Britain was much freer than France to concentrate on amassing transoceanic wealth and power. In time the latter fed into maritime hegemony, which in turn made it impossible for any European rival to successfully challenge her conquest of India, or even seriously to endanger her rule in Ireland or in the English core of her worldwide empire.⁸

A roughly similar comparison could be made between Russia and Austria. The collapse of the Golden Horde and, much later, the decline of the Ottoman Empire left a huge geopolitical vacuum on the southern European steppe and in Siberia. Russia moved into this space and the resources of Siberia, the Urals and "New Russia" were the essential basis for her position as a European great power. Even Ukraine and New Russia were too distant from her great-power rivals for them to stop her first conquering and then developing the resources of this region, which by 1914 was the core of the empire's coal and iron industry, as well as its bread basket and the source of most of its exports. Ukrainian "independence" was only conceivable if protected by one of Russia's great-power competitors. Charles XII was destroyed in the attempt to do this. No other attempt was made until the German protectorate of 1918, created as a consequence of the Russian Empire's collapse.

The contrast with Habsburg efforts in Hungary is revealing. All attempts to bring Hungary securely under Vienna's centralized rule failed. Between 1867 and 1918 this had very serious results as regards to the Habsburgs' ability to mobilize resources for military power, and indeed to stop the Hungarians from alienating the empire's Slav and Rumanian communities. Many factors explain the Habsburg failure to absorb Hungary to the same degree that the Romanovs succeeded in subjugating Ukraine. Geopolitics was crucial, however. On each occasion in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Vienna seemed to have triumphed over the Magyars, either the Ottomans or the Prussians intervened in support of the Hungarian opposition, forcing Vienna into concessions. The basic point is a simple one. Even in east-central Europe, let alone further west, it was far easier for great-power rivals, alone or in coalition, to block expansion.

Once again, to write in these terms might suggest an excessive respect

for geopolitical determinism. In reality, peripherality provided advantages but not any certainty of success. To varying degrees, after all, there were rival powers also on the periphery which had to be defeated before the full advantages of Russia or Britain's peripheral position could be realized. In both cases this required immense effort and considerable skill, not least as regards political leadership and the creation of effective institutions. In the British case, for example, the fact that the country's wealthy elite controlled the state's finances through a stable parliamentary regime contributed enormously to the country's credit-worthiness and thereby to its crucial ability to out-spend a larger and richer France between 1688 and 1815.⁹ In a very different geographical and economic context, the Russian autocratic state and its alliance with the noble serf-owner proved a formidable machine for mobilizing resources for war in a vast, poor and sparsely populated country. In the Russian case it is the inability of its Ottoman rival to match this capacity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which is most significant. This leads one naturally to an obvious but vital point. As is the case with every empire of note, many different factors of power sustained both the British and Russian Empires. These included geopolitics and demography, as well as what Michael Mann calls military, political, economic and ideological factors.¹⁰ The relative importance of these factors changed somewhat over time in both the British and Russian cases: for example, the rise of doctrines of popular sovereignty and ethnic nationalism in the nineteenth century created very serious ideological challenges to both empires which had not previously existed. Where ideological and cultural power are concerned, the balance between the two empires is complicated. The English were unequivocally more "modern" than their subjects in a way which was often untrue of Russians: on the other hand they were also much less willing to assimilate (non-White) subjects into their own metropolitan society and elite than was true in the Russian case. In economic terms the comparison is much more clear-cut. The British Empire was obviously far more sustained by commerce and financial power than was the case with Russia. This was true in the eighteenth century and became even more so in the nineteenth, when the Industrial Revolution began to transform the power of states.

Between 1856 and 1914 Russia remained a great power and a great empire. Despite the fears of some of her ruling élites, she was not relegated to the ranks of a China, a Poland or a Persia—at least not until 1918 when all the worst nightmares of tsarist statesmen were realized with the Germans in Riga and Kiev, the Turks in Baku and Russia disintegrating. By 1914 Russia's potential might and her rapid economic development were a great concern in both Berlin and London. Many predicted that the future, even the near future, would belong to Russia and these foreboding were a very important factor in great-power politics and the coming of the First World War.

Nevertheless in important respects Russia between 1856 and 1914 was on the Second World economic periphery of Europe, in socio-economic terms more comparable to Italy and Spain than to Germany or Britain. It shared too many of the problems of political instability of this peripheral, backward but rapidly modernizing Second World. Unity on the home front is a key factor in any empire's power, as Russia's rulers discovered in 1905 and 1917. In Britain or Germany domestic relative unity was greatly helped by victory in war and the triumphant consolidation of empire. Relative weakness made such victories harder to achieve for peripheral powers, which lost legitimacy as a result. The thirst for legitimacy and recognition drove Spain and Italy into the disasters of Anual and Adowa, which in turn caused major political crises for the liberal regimes.¹¹ Russia's equivalent was the war with Japan and the revolution of 1905, not to mention the subsequent hankering for international status and recognition.

The contrast between Britain's financial and commercial power, and Russia's more traditional military and dynastic empire is fundamental. "Gentlemanly capitalism" may or may not have been the driving spirit of British imperialism: in Russia it would have been a very exotic growth.¹² Relatively weak commercial and financial power helps to explain why Russia was seldom able to exercise indirect control over even contiguous areas by economic means. Political domination and annexation was usually likelier to come more quickly than in the British case, though as always this depended in part on whether the threat of rival empires' competition was a spur to formalize direct political control.

The contrast between British commercial and Russian military-dynastic empire overlaps with another distinction: the one between maritime and land empire. Since from the sixteenth century to the creation of the railway (and actually in many cases beyond) long-distance trade was far cheaper and quicker by water one reason for the overlap is clear. In the view of many scholars the contrast between maritime and land empire also entails the distinction between a far-flung collection of colonies in the former case, and a polity which is in embryo at least a unified state, and maybe even a potential nation-state. Added together, these contrasts are often summarized as the distinction between liberal, diffuse maritime power on the one hand, and autocratic, centralizing land empire on the other.

To some of these issues I will return later in this paper. For the moment just let me make three comments. On the one hand, it is certainly true that an empire which derives its wealth and its revenues from trade, finance and industry is likely to be distinctly less repressive than one whose might depends on extracting tax and conscripts from a subsistence-oriented peasantry. Moreover, long-distance trade has some implications for the spread of ideas and the opening of minds. On the other hand it would be naïve automatically to equate maritime and liberal empire. Despite their dependence on sea communications, for instance, neither the Spanish nor

the Japanese Empires fall easily into the liberal category. Nor does the history of these two empires confirm the idea that maritime empire must always be de-centralized, while land empire automatically breeds centralization. In the sixteenth century, for instance, Castile ran the overseas empire in more centralized fashion than it was able to govern metropolitan Spain. The nineteenth-century Habsburg Empire in a sense became the ancestor of the contemporary multi-ethnic federation. Geography does indeed cast a heavy shadow on empires but politics usually casts an even heavier one.¹³

At present, however, it is the strategic differences between land and sea empire which concern me. Before the railway it was quicker and easier to supply and project power across great distances by sea than by land. That made it easier for the British to conquer India than for the Russians to confront the Manchu army in north-eastern Asia. On the other hand, a sea-borne empire's internal communications are far more subject to interdiction than that is the case with a consolidated land empire. Only if the maritime empire enjoys global maritime hegemony and is not vulnerable to a *guerre de course* does this cease to be true, and this is a rare situation and one which depends in part on shifts in naval technology such as the arrival of the submarine.

The consequences for a maritime empire of its sea links being cut can be rapid and devastating. By the 1780s the Spanish State was very dependent on American revenues. Without them it would be unable to sustain its armed forces and would also need to mount a major assault on powerful vested interests within Spain even partially to compensate for lost imperial revenues. The British navy's cutting of maritime links with America in the 1790s and subsequent Spanish dependence on Britain in 1808–14 contributed enormously to the loss of Spain's American Empire. As a result Spain ceased to be a great power and for more than a generation was wracked by extreme domestic instability, which owed much to the state's bankruptcy and the desperate remedies it sought to escape from fiscal crisis.¹⁴

For a century after 1815 Britain was spared realistic fears of a Spanish-style catastrophe. In the twentieth century, however, she twice faced the acute danger that her maritime communications and trade would be cut by German submarines. In the Second World War this threat was all the greater because by then the British Empire was faced by the consequences of the rise of non-European powers and the challenge they presented to her global position. Growing dependence on the United States came at a considerable price, not least as regards the ending of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and the dismantling of Britain's pre-1914 system of imperial security in the Far East.¹⁵ The consequences of this policy became clear in 1941. Faced by the rise of Japan, however, Britain and Russia in many ways were confronted by a similar challenge, despite the fact that one was a land and the other a sea power. Both were first and foremost European polities whose populations, political capitals and core economic centers were located in

Europe. On the other hand, both had valuable territories and interests in East Asia, which were much closer to the core of Japanese power than to their own. If challenged simultaneously in Europe and East Asia the survival of both empires would be at risk. Russian leaders both before 1914 and in the 1930s recognized this reality. So did many British leaders in the 1930s. It was far from pre-determined at that time whether Japan would choose to strike north against Russia or south against Britain.¹⁶

This is merely one example of how Britain and Russia faced many common imperial strategic challenges despite the fact that the former was a maritime and the latter a land empire. Overshadowing everything was the point already mentioned: the security of both empires' core would be imperiled by the ability of either France or Germany to dominate the whole of western and central Europe. Almost as significant, however, was the fact that from the mid 1750s to 1917 Britain could not afford to be a purely maritime empire, nor Russia a purely land one.

In the British case this is rather obvious. Possession of Canada and India gave it enormous land frontiers to worry about. The Russian dilemma will be less familiar, at least to an Anglophone audience. The basic point was that tsarist Russia was part of a European and global economy in its last 150 years. Being cut off from the world economy had grievous financial and domestic political consequences. This was true when Alexander I submitted to Napoleon's Continental System after Tilsit, when the allies blockaded Russia in the Crimean War, and when the Sound and the Straits were controlled by the Central Powers in the First World War. In addition, the expansion of the Russian Empire had placed key cities, including the imperial capital, on vulnerable coastlines. In the case of the Black Sea and the Pacific one had to create fleets, bases and supporting infrastructure at immense distances from the core of Russian power and at the end of very imperfect communications. This added to the already huge cost of naval power, which always entails the use of the most sophisticated and expensive technologies. In addition, these fleets and bases were extremely vulnerable to enemy amphibious counter-strokes. In the Crimean and Japanese wars this resulted in the loss of both fleets and bases. To solve these dilemmas of naval and imperial security was, however, well beyond tsarist Russia's means. Over the whole period of 1789–1917 the Straits and Constantinople were the biggest continual worry. Any substantial power established in Constantinople could interdict Russia's crucial exports at will and threaten the whole of her Black Sea coastline. This was Russia's equivalent to a foreign power dominant in Belgium and the Channel. But even if the Russians had finally succeeded in taking Constantinople their problems would still be far from solution. They would now find themselves in the happy position of Italian naval strategists, locked into a Mediterranean Sea whose exits were all controlled by Britain and whose trade was dependent on British goodwill.¹⁷

The distinction between land and maritime empires encompasses much more than military issues, very important though these are. A key common element of many empires, crucial in both the Russian and British cases, was colonization. The creation through colonization of new England and new Russias transformed global geopolitics. On the whole Western historians of empire have been most interested in the maritime empires' role in the creation of today's global economy. A key reason for this concentration is the Marxist critique of empire, which is rooted in economic analysis and goes to the heart of ideological disputes not just in the Cold War but also in today's debate on Third World poverty and dependence. In the creation of today's world, however, European colonization was as important as empire's integration of a global economy. Russians mostly colonized contiguous lands. British colonists for the most part traveled overseas. Almost all the areas colonized by Britons are now independent states. Many of those colonized by Russians, and most notably Siberia, are still part of the Russian federation. In his survey of colonialism, Jürgen Osterhammel argues that this is the usual distinction between colonization in land and sea empires.¹⁸

It is not hard to understand why this should be the case. Oceanic communications are long and vulnerable. The metropolis may well prove unable to defend overseas colonies from external threats or to project sufficient power to deter internal enemies. In the minds of the colonist, the long and terrifying sea voyage creates a sense of being in a new and alien land. So too may the natural environment he or she encounters in a strange new land. The frontier has its own inherent mores and society, different inevitably from the hierarchical world of the metropolis. All of these points are true, and yet in themselves they are not sufficient to explain the separate trajectory of Russian, British and Spanish colonies of settlement. A great gulf separated the Cossack raider from the seventeenth-century tsarist elite: much greater indeed than the political and cultural divide between London and Virginian gentlemen. A conscious Siberian regional movement and identity grew up in the nineteenth century rooted partly in frontier conditions and partly in cross-breeding with indigenous peoples¹⁹: no British settler made the latter a marker of separate identity from his or her motherland. In a different political context it is perfectly conceivable that separate Cossack and Siberian statehood could have emerged. The tsarist State ensured that this did not happen.

Crucial to the eradication of politically salient Cossack and Siberian identities was the refusal of the tsarist State to allow anything like the colonial assemblies and other political institutions around which separate identities formed, were politicized, and were defended in the British Empire. In the Spanish Empire nothing on this scale existed but provincial institutions packed by Creole elite who had often bought their offices also helped to consolidate separate identities and to define the borders of future independent states. There are very imprecise parallels here with the federal struc-

ture of the Soviet Union's ultimate impact on the formation of separate states: tsarist Russia was more unequivocally uniform and centralized, above all in its Slav provinces.

The autocracy tended to make short work of regional institutions and political identities, partly on principle and partly to maximize revenues. It is true that in certain peripheral regions, above all Finland, the Baltic provinces and (briefly) Poland, semi-autonomous local institutions did survive. But the logic of autocracy, not to mention Russian feeling, made it very difficult to combine autocracy in the Russian core and greater civil and political freedom in the non-Russian periphery. The Decembrists made this point clear to Nicholas I. But the unity and indivisibility of the empire was an absolute principle from the start.

A similar logic worked in the other direction in the British overseas Empire. From its early days a clear distinction was made between the Kingdom of England (and later the United Kingdom) and overseas colonies. This was in part recognition of distance and geographical realities. As regards the non-White empire, however, it also came to be rooted in fear lest in Roman fashion the republican rights of a free people would be sacrificed to the corruption and despotism of oriental empire. This helps to explain fears in the late eighteenth century that "nabobs" returning with their ill-gotten gains from India would subvert England's constitution. The sharp distinction between metropolis and colony provided constitutional justification why the inhabitants of the former could be treated as citizens while some of the latter's peoples were seen as mere subjects. Nevertheless, from the start, the right of free Englishmen to civil rights and representation was accepted. It is true that extending the inherent rights of Englishmen to all subjects of the crown took centuries. But even in the 1790s, when authoritarian doctrines were strengthened by the loss of America and the confrontation with revolution in France, the French colonists in Canada were still granted representation and civil rights.²⁰ Despite imperialist and racist arrogance, civil and political rights had been extended to Indian elite and middle classes before the First World War.

It is important to strike a balance between recognizing the long-term impact of metropolitan political traditions on the empire on the one hand, and, on the other hand, avoiding too teleological a view and one that seeks to deny the very different paths of empire's provinces and colonies, not to mention the great distinctions between different eras. This becomes obvious when one compares the British and Russian empires. Both evolved over time. Both were multi-faced. If there were few "gentlemanly financiers" in Russia, in both the Russian and British imperial systems there were plenty of military pro-consuls,²¹ colonists and indigenous aristocratic clients of empire. Above all, the various British and Russian provinces and colonies embodied different aspects of empire. In certain cases British-Russian com-

parisons have some validity. In others they make little sense, save perhaps usefully to emphasize how very different the two empires were.

The closest equivalent to the British nineteenth-century non-White empire was Central Asia, which was useful to the Russians partly as a source of cotton and partly as a weapon in the Great Game. Comparisons with British Egypt spring to mind. The earlier fur-based empire in Siberia had most in common with France's equivalent dominion in Canada. The huge overseas new Englands and new Spains, settler colonies that later flooded the world market with grain and meat, had their closest equivalent in the colonists who flooded into the southern steppe and turned new Russia into the empire's breadbasket. Very importantly, this vast and crucial new region of settlement did not undermine the tsarist social order. A landowning aristocracy, partly made up of old Russian nobles but also partly of foreigners and the socially mobile, grew up in this area and was incorporated into the tsarist elite. Nineteenth-century Siberia by contrast was the land of the peasant colonist. Since the British American colonies had their planter Virginians and their farmer-colonists in New England perhaps one can draw a parallel.

In some respects the western borderlands of the Tsarist Empire, at least in its last decades, were totally different to the British Empire. Throughout the latter's existence British elite, and indeed the broader population, was convinced of its own superiority in civilization, power and economic development to the peoples whose lands it colonized and among whom it lived. By the second half of the nineteenth century the enormous increase in British power provided by the Industrial Revolution had strengthened these convictions. The enormous disparity in power between the most advanced European powers and Third World states and peoples was one key reason both for the wave of annexations between 1875 and 1914, and for the extreme arrogance often shown at that time towards lesser breeds.

Russia by contrast was on the backward eastern borderlands of Europe. The Industrial Revolution initially widened the gap between European core and periphery. Moreover, in the eighteenth century, Tsarist Russia had been a triumphant success in the core business of empire, namely war and territorial expansion. This reduced anxieties about cultural backwardness: after all, the Roman elite often bowed before Greek culture, comforting themselves by reminders of their own military and political triumphs.

The last decades of Tsarism felt less glorious and the confidence of Russian elite fell. The sense of vulnerability linked to the disruptions caused by capitalism's inroads in the western borderlands was very much enhanced by two Polish rebellions and by German unification. Enemies seemed to be gathering within and without. Germany by 1900 was very much the most powerful state in Europe, in both military and economic terms. Elite in the western borderlands might be Polish, or they might be German or Jewish.

The former had good reason to prefer Habsburg tolerance to Russian oppression. The latter had equal reason often to prefer both Austria and Germany. Whatever their preferences, they dominated society in the area which any invasion of the Russian heartland would have to cross. All these factors, together of course with typical late-Victorian imperialist and racist conceptions, fed into Russian thinking about the western borderlands. Above all, knowledge that Russia was inferior in power to Germany, and that the Russian masses lagged behind Germans, Poles and Jews in terms of literacy, wealth and entrepreneurship, fed into an acute sense of ethno-cultural insecurity which was very untypical indeed of Europe's overseas empires, though readily comprehensible when one recalls Dostoevsky's famous contrast between Russia's position in Europe and Asia.

In some respects, however, there are useful parallels to be drawn with certain British colonies even as regards the western borderlands. Ireland and Poland are cases in point. Certainly no Englishman regarded the Irish as culturally more advanced than his own country. In that sense any parallel with late-nineteenth-century Russian Poland is nonsense. On the other hand, in both cases metropolis and colonial province were divided by deep ethno-religious and historical hatred. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries Ireland was regarded as England's dangerously vulnerable back door, through which Catholic French or Spanish power could invade. The English in time responded by uprooting the Irish landowning elite, and denying places in government and the professions to Catholics. By so doing they convinced themselves that their rule in Ireland was secure, in the absence that is of French invasion.²² In nineteenth-century Poland the Russians followed a similar strategy though with less thoroughness, ruthlessness and success.

Maybe they should have learned the lesson of nineteenth-century Ireland, where mass literacy and socio-economic modernization contributed to undermining the eighteenth-century settlement and with it the union.²³ The key point here is that in the pre-modern era an empire could safely be a federation of aristocracies. The Russian Empire was one variant on this type of polity. It absorbed a range of non-Russian aristocracies into the imperial elite, offering them the rewards and prestige of careers in the imperial service but also protection against their serfs and the benefits of an imperial market for the produce of their estates. Obviously, for example, the Baltic German aristocracy was greater beneficiaries of Tsarist Empire than Russia's enserfed peasantry. The eighteenth-century British Empire was already more than just an aristocratic federation. It was a great trading network, for example, and it had relatively democratic self-governing colonies of settlement too. But much of the empire was an aristocratic federation and indeed parts of it remained so well into the twentieth century. By then holding Ireland through alliance with the Protestant aristocratic "Ascendancy" was long out of date. In less developed regions such as the Gulf,

India and Malaya a similar policy of alliance with aristocratic elite remained for the time being a viable option, in whole or part.

In late nineteenth-century Poland, as in Ireland, this strategy was no longer sufficient. New policies would be needed to keep societies as advanced as Poland or Ireland within an empire, especially as democratic and ethno-nationalist doctrines put down deep roots in Europe and challenged the traditional ideological underpinnings of empire. In the Russian case, spending time and resources on seeking unsuccessfully to implant a Russian landowning class in the western borderlands was fruitless: resources devoted the primary education of the local Byelorussian and Ukrainian peasantry in a "Russian spirit" would have been better spent.²⁴ But Tsarism in the 1860s was disinclined to think in these terms. Moreover the regime's poor relations with much of the intelligentsia meant that teachers could as easily turn into agents of social revolution as of imperial patriotism and Russian cultural assimilation.²⁵

This brings out one of the crucial weaknesses of the Tsarist Empire in its final decades. Partly because they were denied secure civil or political rights, the commitment of the Russian intelligentsia to the Tsarist Empire was very often grudging at best. This was bound to have an impact on emerging non-Russian intelligentsia's too, who could hardly be expected to be more enthusiastic about Tsarism than their Russian counterparts were. The contrast with the United Kingdom is obvious. Before 1914, for example, the overwhelming majority of educated Scotsmen happily combined Scottish and British identities with great pride in the British Empire. The fact that this empire had for generations been seen as the world's most advanced, wealthy and powerful polity of course contributed enormously to this. So too, however, did the fact that Scotsmen enjoyed the civil and political rights of British citizens, not to mention separate Scottish ecclesiastical, legal and educational systems. Even among the Catholic Irish middle class at the beginning of the twentieth century, the benefits of belonging to the British Empire were widely accepted. Home Rule was a popular cause: full independence was not.

Trying to draw overall conclusions from comparisons between the British and Russian Empires is a difficult task. As has been stressed, these were huge and heterogeneous polities, which differed greatly from province to province and from era to era. One way to focus comparisons is to think about power, above all in its external, international context. Such power seems to me to be the core, the *raison d'être* and the essence of empire. Both the British and the Russian Empires were first and foremost very great powers. Given this reality and given the fact that European great powers operated within a single international system it is not surprising that one can find many parallels between this aspect of British and Russian imperialism. The fact that these were not just great powers but also empires on the European periphery adds further similarities. So too in part does

the fact that the two empires by the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were operating in a pan-European world of ideas. As empires, by 1900, for example, they both faced the challenges of doctrines of ethnic nationalism and popular sovereignty. If one operates at a high enough level of generalization one can see parallels not just in this challenge but also in the two empires' response to it. But the moment one descends from this altitude the very great differences between the two polities become clear.

Let me try to be more precise. From the 1850s it seems to me that all empires faced a common dilemma. It was becoming commonplace by the second half of the nineteenth century that the future would belong to polities of continental scale. Only they would remain truly great powers. From de Tocqueville and Herzen to Seeley, Mackinder, Leroy-Beaulieu and Treitschke this was a common opinion. It was the key idea that underpinned the age of "High Imperialism." But socio-economic modernization in Europe, together with the spread of nationalist and democratic ideologies, seemed to question the long-term viability of empire. How was the circle to be squared?

Different empires adopted a varied mix of policies to try to square this circle. A very common strategy was to try to consolidate as much as possible of the empire into a core ethno-national polity. This would ensure that at least in its core the polity could legitimize itself and mobilize resources through appeals to popular nationalism. Around this core the smaller and more backward subject imperial peoples could be attracted by the benefits empire offered: these included security, access to a wide market, and the prestige of belonging to a great polity and maybe civilization.

Both British and Russian imperialists often thought in these terms. In the British case, empire federation entailed an attempt at consolidating the United Kingdom and the White colonies into a worldwide Greater British federation, speaking with a single voice on defense and foreign policy, possessing elements of a single protected imperial market, and united by a common British pride and identity. The Russian equivalent to this was the determination to ensure that no separate Ukrainian or Byelorussian political identity or high culture could emerge.²⁶ If Ukrainian and Byelorussian peasants could be transformed into modern Russian citizens, who identified with the Russian State and Russian-language high culture then two-thirds of the empire would come from the core nationality. If they developed a separate, let alone separatist, national consciousness then only 44% of the population would be Russian—in other words less than the percentage of Germans and Hungarians in the Habsburg Monarchy.

If Russian and British imperialists could agree on a broad outline of strategy, however, history, political traditions, and the nature of their societies ensured that both the specific challenges they faced and the way they met them were very different. Molding the identities of illiterate Ukrainian peasants as they first experienced education, urbanization and modernity

was a very different challenge to trying to persuade highly literate and politically articulate White colonials to retain a strong sense of British identity and political loyalty to the British State. Political contexts were also very different. Always rooted in the conviction that free Englishmen deserved civil rights and representation, the British Empire from the 1840s had moved consistently towards colonial self-government. Negotiation and consensus building between de facto almost independent states was the reality that confronted British Empire Federalists of the late-Victorian era. Anything less like the tsarist regime's relationship with the Ukrainian village would be hard to imagine. Equally, in comparing the position of Ireland and Poland in 1900 the contrast between liberal and increasingly democratic Britain on the one hand and tsarist autocracy on the other is obvious and crucial. In Ireland the British state had bought out the landlords, ceded control over education and local government to the Catholic majority, and guaranteed civil rights to all and political representation to a mass electorate. Such approaches to neutralizing and living with Irish nationalism were totally inconceivable in the tsarist context.

So we come back to the contrast between liberal and authoritarian empire. This is fitting because; whatever the importance and the similarities of the geopolitical position and power politics of rival empires, the values for which they stand remain very significant. A key point about empires and great powers after all is that their ideologies dominate the globe. At which point value judgements between empires are inevitable.

No doubt most contemporary Europeans would opt unhesitatingly on these grounds for the British liberal model of empire over the tsarist one. The good reasons for this choice should not, however, blind one to some of liberal empire's inherent defects. To take but one example: both Guicciardini and Hume make the point that it is much preferable to be the subject of a prince than of a republic from whose body of citizens one's own community is excluded. They drew this conclusion from the study of Antiquity and the Italian city-state era. Never, however, was this conclusion more amply justified than in the White settler colonies. These were the most democratic polities of their day. As regards indigenous peoples or indeed all peoples of non-White race they were also among the most brutal and unjust, systematically expropriating native land, denying the most basic civil rights, and frequently not just turning a blind eye but actually rejoicing in ethnic cleansing and mass murder.²⁷ For the native population, traditional bureaucratic or aristocratic empires were in general far preferable. This maybe conveys a warning. To the extent that we now live in a highly inter-dependent and globalized world, the First World electorates have an enormous power over what happens outside North America and Europe. If the parallel with the White settler colonies is anything to go by, democracy in the First World is no guarantee whatsoever that the interests of Third World dependents will get much of a hearing.

NOTES

- 1 In my book *Empire. The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (London: John Murray, 2000). In general part of this paper is derived directly from research I did for this book. I refer readers to the notes and, in particular, to the long bibliographical essay to be found in the book. I will only note here a few key texts and a number of works published since I wrote the book.
- 2 L. Colley, "What is Imperial History Now?" in D. Cannadine, ed., *What Is History Now?* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002).
- 3 H. M. Scott, *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers 1756–1775* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 4 P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin, 2001).
- 5 A deservedly key theme in D. Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War. Europe 1904–1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
- 6 E.g. John Charmley. For a brief summary of some of his main conclusions see J. Charmley, "Chamberlain, Churchill and the End of Empire," in E. Brix, K. Koch, E. Vyslonzil, eds., *The Decline of Empires*, (Munich, Vienna: Oldenbourg/Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2001), 127–34.
- 7 I make this point in more detail in D. Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War* (London Macmillan, 1983), especially chapter 4, section 1.
- 8 For useful comparisons between Britain's wars for empire see B. Lenham, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688–1783* (London: Longman, 2001).
- 9 See in particular, R. Bonney's chapter, "The Eighteenth Century. The Struggle for Great Power Status and the End of the Old Fiscal Regime," in R. Bonney, ed., *Economic Systems and Finance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 315 ff.
- 10 M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 11 Two excellent recently published books reflect on this aspect of Spanish and Italian imperialism: S. Balfour, *Deadly Embrace. Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002); C. Duggan, *Francesco Crispi. From Nation to Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See e.g. Colin Gray.
- 12 The term is of course that coined by P.J. Cain, A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2000*, 2 vols, 2nd edition (New York: Longman, 2001).
- 13 "History for Strategists: British Seapower as a Relevant Past" in G. Till, ed., *Seapower: Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), 7 ff.
- 14 See e.g. D. Ringrose, *Spain, Europe and the "Spanish Miracle" 1700–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Also chapter 9 of J. Lynch, *Bourbon Spain. 1700–1808* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
- 15 Apart from the chapters on imperial and naval overstretch in G. Till, ed., *Seapower*, see also I. Nish, ed., *Anglo-Japanese Alienation 1919–1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 16 See e.g. Stalin's comparison of Russia's situation in 1914 and 1935, cited in R. Tucker, *Stalin in Power. The Revolution from Above, 1928–41* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 343.
- 17 These are points covered in a forthcoming article I am writing on Russian naval strategy between 1905 and 1914 based on research in the Russian naval archive.
- 18 J. Osterhammel, *Colonialism* (Princeton, Kingston: Marcus Wiener, Ian Randle, 1997), 4ff.
- 19 See e.g. W. Faust, *Russlands Goldener Bodfen. Der Sibirische Regionalismus in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Köln, Wien: Böhlau, 1980).

- 20 See C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World. 1780–1830* (London, New York: Longman, 1989).
- 21 See e.g. the comparisons in E.A. Glushchenko, *Stroiteli imperii. Portrety kolonialnykh deyatelei, Moscow* (Dom XXI vek – soglasie, 2000).
- 22 S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power. The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 250.
- 23 See the interesting discussion of the development of civil society in 19th century Ireland in chapter 5 of B. Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002).
- 24 Points made well by W. Rodkiewicz, *Russian Nationality Policy in the Western Provinces of the Empire* (Lublin: Scientific Society of Lublin, 1998).
- 25 There is a voluminous bibliography on the role of education in nineteenth-century nation-building: an interesting recent addition is C. Boyd, *Historia Patria. Politics, History and National Identity in Spain, 1875–1975* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 26 On this see in addition to sources mentioned in D. Lieven, *Empire. The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (London: John Murray, 2000), the very interesting new work by A. I. Miller, “*Ukrainskii vopros*” *v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraya polovina XIX v.)*, Saint Petersburg: Aleteya, 2000).
- 27 This is not just to throw stones at the British settler colonies and the USA. Algerian natives fared much better under the authoritarian rule of Napoleon III than under the democratic Third Republic, see I. Lustick, *State-Building Failure in British Ireland and French Algeria* (Berkeley: Calif.: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1985), chapter 4.

The Spanish Empire and its End: A Comparative View in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe

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A striking feature of bibliography of the Spanish Empire and the consequences of imperial collapse in 1898 is its relatively high degree of self-absorption. This seems to mirror the international isolation of its dynastic elite at the time, reliant until the Spanish–American War on family and religious connections rather than on *engagement* in the system of international relations for the preservation of its empire. It also reflects a traditional view held among Spaniards and foreigners until recently that Spain had a unique destiny. In the 1930s, W. H. Auden wrote

“...that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot
Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe...”¹

In contrast to this tragic view of Spain, the Spanish Right elaborated the myth of a God-given mission, a “destiny in the universal,” as the obtuse Francoist propaganda put it. This sense of particularity rested on a distorted or invented reading of the past in which the conquistadors had brought the only true religion to most of the world and that world was now disintegrating because it was failing to conform to Christian values. The true identity of Spain could only be renewed by cleansing its inhabitants of non-Spanish ideologies emanating from Europe, such as liberalism, Marxism and Freemasonry.²

In fact, as recent literature has stressed, Spain was always part of Europe and shared common dilemmas and historical processes.³ However, Spain has invariably been compared to its northern European or Mediterranean neighbors. There are many obvious parallels between Spain and Italy, in particular, such as the division between an underdeveloped agrarian south and an industrialized north, a weak, clientele-based state, and an authoritarian response in the 1920s and 30s to the resulting cleavages. But there has been little effort in the historiography of Spain to draw wider parallels. In this chapter, therefore, I want to explore analogies and differences with the pre-1914 central European and Eurasian empires. There are of course many areas where comparison would be fruitful, such as religion, monarchy and the military, to name just a few. But I wish to focus, if only briefly,

on war, nationalism, mechanisms of legitimacy, modernization, and relations between core and colonies, as well as between center and periphery within the state itself.

In any cursory comparison of the Spanish Empire with the Romanov, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, it is clear that it belongs to a very different model: that of the peripheral, discontinuous empires of 18th and 19th century Europe embracing the old overseas maritime empires and including the Portuguese and the Dutch.⁴ Unlike the central and Eastern European continuous land empires, the imperial power of these maritime nations rested largely on commerce and by extension on merchant and military navies. The Russian and Austrian empires on the contrary, were continental, military bureaucracies.⁵ Yet unlike the British Empire, these maritime empires had a weak industrial and military base, which made them vulnerable to expansionist powers, and their domestic legitimacy was limited to the elite so they could not easily draw on popular resources for their defense. With the rise of nationalism in the old colonies and the global expansion of new and old great powers, such as the United States, Japan, Britain, France and Germany, these maritime empires faded or collapsed. A third and later model may be identified in the peripheral European powers that sought to create colonies in what might be described as the third wave of European expansion, the international scramble for colonial space from the 1860s onwards. These included Italy and Belgium and, in a new expansion of the old maritime empires, both Spain and Portugal.

However, like the three continental empires in Europe and Eurasia, the power of these peripheral empires depended to a great extent on their relationship with the emerging core of European powers, France, Britain and Germany. As well as the Romanov, Ottoman and Habsburg empires, the problems of nation-building, state legitimating and center-periphery relations in Spain were crucially linked to the retention of the territories of the empire or, as the Spanish elite perceived it in the late 18th century, the overseas provinces of the metropolis.

Spain lost most of its empire in the first quarter of the nineteenth century through the revolt of colonial elites of Spanish origin allied with blacks and native Americans. The wars of independence in Latin America saw no direct involvement of other great powers nor were they ethnic or religious wars, as in central and Eastern Europe. The wealthy Creoles in Spanish America had viewed Spain as the mother country and supported the restoration of the monarchy during the rule of Joseph Bonaparte. But six years of *de facto* independence had created deep cleavages and the re-imposition of metropolitan commercial monopoly and military rule after the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy strengthened the nationalist movements.⁶ From the metropolis the wars were largely seen as internal revolts or civil wars involving members of an extended family who were expected to retain close cultural and economic links after they had abandoned the family house.⁷ In

this sense, they were very different to the national liberation struggles in the three great empires in which language, religion and ethnicity played a fundamental role. The Latin American struggles for independence were driven by political nationalism while the Habsburg and Ottoman empires were driven by ethnic and religious fractures.

The domestic impact of Spain's loss of the great majority of its overseas empire in the early 19th century was cushioned by the turmoil of the civil wars between absolutists and liberals after the fall of the Napoleonic regime of Joseph Bonaparte and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. But the monarchical state in Spain was not critically undermined by the loss of most of its overseas colonies. Empire did not have the political significance it acquired later in the century when modernization and imperial competition created communities with national identities. Equally important, Spain retained the semblance of an empire in the colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands and a clutch of small islands in the Pacific, the Palaos, Marianas and Carolines (as well as its relatively small African possessions). Cuba was the jewel in the crown of the empire, a colony from which Spain derived some of its wealth and to which it exported many of its manufactured goods. Spanish elites could still feel part of an imperial club, however diminished their empire had become.⁸

For the protection of this now reduced and strung-out empire, the Spanish crown and the political elites relied on small garrisons and naval fleets that were necessarily light because of the distances they had to travel. This weak military defense was backed by old-fashioned diplomacy and dynastic links. In the context of the redistribution of colonial power that accelerated from the 1870s, this was a flawed policy, yet no strategy would probably have saved the colonies from either internal revolt or external pressure. The process of colonial take-over and share-out became so rapid that by the last decade of the century most of the uncolonized parts of world had been drawn into the sphere of influence of one or other Great Power. Tensions were breaking out all over the world over the demarcation of these spheres and the relative rights of trade and navigation.⁹ Unlike the contested borders of the Central European Empires, the pressures facing Spain above all concerned the ambitions of other powers to control trade routes, and to establish ports, coaling stations and submarine cables.

This new expansionism had no respect for supposed historical rights and was based on the contrary on an explicit or implicit Social Darwinism. Diplomatic traditions, shared European identities, and dynastic connections were less important than *Realpolitik*. The Queen Regent of Spain was the niece of both the Austrian Emperor Franz Josef and Queen Victoria. The Pope was godfather to her son. But when war broke out with the United States, the emerging regional power setting out on its first expansionary adventure, none of the European monarchies made any real effort to halt it. Britain had forged an informal alliance with the United States, among

other reasons because the latter supported an Open Door policy in the Far East. Germany hoped to make new acquisitions in the Pacific and preferred to have the United States as its rival in the Pacific rather than another European power. The Vatican made only a half-hearted and unsuccessful attempt at mediation.¹⁰ With US intervention imminent in the colonial wars in Cuba and the Philippine Islands, the Spanish regime may well have calculated that handing over the colonies without a fight was more dangerous for its own survival than losing the war with the United States.¹¹

The loss of the remnants of the empire in Latin America, after the disastrous encounter with the United States in 1898, destroyed the legitimizing myth of empire. The empire had in the past provided the elites in Spain with an overarching purpose. For the economic elites it had offered the extraction of wealth and export of domestic products to colonies, for the Church a continued evangelical mission, and for the military an imperial status compensating its Third World pay. This purpose disappeared with the disappearance of the Empire. The advantages of being Spanish were no greater now than the advantages of being Catalan or Basque. However, unlike the Habsburg or Ottoman Empires, where imperial collapse led to the emergence of a complex and fragmented pattern of new multinational states, the Spanish state remained in place, a continued source of patronage and power from which the regional elites had neither sufficient mass support nor the will to secede.

The Spanish State had largely been based on the land-owning oligarchy, the military and the Church. Its organic intellectuals had made some effort in the nineteenth century to project a national identity through state institutions, monuments, school textbooks, literature and popular music, such as the Zarzuelas. The myths sustaining this identity were built around a distorted history of the medieval Reconquest, the Spanish American Empire and more recently the anti-Napoleonic war.¹² However, the state's efforts to turn peasants into Spaniards had been weak and relatively ineffectual, despite the fact that, unlike the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman states, it could draw on a common stock of national myths, however invented. Among Spanish peasants and landworkers, the rate of illiteracy was almost 100%, as among Russian peasants. The chronically impoverished exchequer failed to raise any significant capital to invest in public works and education. And modernization proceeded at a snail's pace in all but the peripheral regions of the north. Indeed, the state hardly touched the lives of most Spaniards. Instead, the political elites relied on power brokers in the provinces, such as landowners and priests, to dispense funds and organize votes.

The colonial wars of the 1890s and the Spanish-American War of 1898 had seen a massive mobilization of the Spanish people for the defense of the Empire. Perhaps for the first time, Spanish nationalist values stretched into areas where local and religious identities had predominated over national

identity. The campaign had been the first serious effort at mass nationalization in a country fragmented by localism and regionalism. The icons of national identity that were mobilized for the war effort expressed above all the values of conservative center, patrician, Castilian, Catholic and anti-liberal, projecting a monocultural Spain in contrast to its multicultural and multilinguistic realities. The very vigor of that campaign of nationalization intensified the delegitimization of these values resulting from the defeat of 1898. The Disaster undermined the late representations of Spanish national identity and favored the growth of different identities and ideologies, from socialism to regional nationalism, just as the collapse of the Romanov Empire led to a burgeoning of alternative national and political identities.¹³

This then was a crisis not just of identity but also of political legitimacy. And it extended to many of the elites that had benefited from the Empire. The cement that held the different elites together during the nineteenth century had derived from the common exploitation of the colonies and the protectionist wall behind which industry could continue to produce goods for the internal market and the remaining colonies. Progressive Spanish nationalism in that century, on the other hand, had been largely jacobinist, based on a project of modernization, laicization and universal education modeled on the French Republic. But it was also centralizing and therefore unappealing to the emerging peripheral nationalisms. When the last colonies were lost, the minority cultural nationalisms of Catalonia and the Basque Country became mass political movements. The state could no longer provide guaranteed markets to those economic activities in Spain dependent on trade with the colonies and its disastrous defeat dealt a profound blow to its already weak legitimacy.

But the emergence of popular nationalist movements in the aftermath of the empire was more than a response to a political crisis. The end of the empire also intensified a long-term structural crisis whose roots lay in the contradictions thrown up by an accelerating pace of modernization. These contradictions were in many respects similar to the challenge of modernization in the Habsburg and Romanov Empires. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, parts of Spain had undergone a rapid transformation through demographic change and an accelerating modernization. Mortality rates had fallen through improved living standards and the introduction of vaccines in the urban centers. The growth of industry was drawing large numbers of agricultural workers to the industrial cities. Modernization transformed social and professional structures, creating a mass working class and a multi-layered professional middle class. This in turn gave rise to new political discourses among the opposition and sections of the elites, as well as socialist and populist movements mobilizing the new layers of migrants in urban centers. It stimulated demands often backed by riots and strikes for greater political participation, union rights, and better conditions at work. Middle-class fears of revolt from below led

some intellectuals to reject modernization and look for a past utopia such as a pastoral society of small farmers or mythologize the past, seeing medieval Castilla as a model for the present. The attraction of the Basque nationalist movement for the most insecure sections of society was its invention of an unchanging past. Others on the contrary became increasingly committed to social and political change.¹⁴

Thus by the second decade of the twentieth century, Spanish society had become increasingly polarized between the extremes of modernity and tradition, anti-clericalism and the Church, center and periphery, city and countryside, landlessness and latifundia, the Castilian-based state nationalism and regional nationalisms and so on. This crisis came to a head in 1917, 1923, 1931, and finally in the Civil War of 1936–39. In other words, the loss of the old empire intensified an already latent structural and ideological crisis, exacerbating contradictions between the political system and social reality. The events of the post-1898 war period, therefore, crystallized the pattern of conflict that would characterize the following three decades.¹⁵

So far it should be obvious that the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman Empires shared many of the Spanish contradictions of modernization that I have enumerated. But the most problematic parallel between these and Spain is the effect of political crisis on relations between the center and the periphery. Of course, industrialization and urbanization in all these states were unevenly distributed. In Spain they were concentrated in the Basque Country and Catalonia, while in the Habsburg Empire, for example, they occurred in Bohemia and the German provinces. And as in the Habsburg and Romanov Empires, asymmetric modernization and cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences in Spain widened hitherto latent center–periphery cleavages. The peripheral nationalisms in Spain began as cultural movements largely confined to a small minority of the urban middle-classes, like the middle-class movements in Austria and Hungary, with their rewriting of history and their search for national roots in literature and folklore. As in the three land empires, the effects of modernization were both centrifugal and centripetal. These effects helped to consolidate national identities but also deepened divisions among the different nationalities that composed the populations.¹⁶ The weakness of the center encouraged the emergence of ethnic and political nationalism on the periphery. And these new nationalisms in turn produced a psychosis of national disintegration among the military, the Church, and the oligarchy.

Nevertheless, the two regional nationalisms that took political shape in the aftermath of the Disaster had very different origins and different programs of national self-assertion. Indeed, it is here where analogies with center–periphery relations in the three empires break down. Ethnic and linguistic factors, so crucial in the nationalisms of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, play an important but subaltern role in those of the Spanish State.

We need only consider the paradoxical effects of linguistic differentiation in Spain to realize that it was not a necessary condition of regional nationalism. The region with the strongest non-Castilian linguistic roots, Galicia, has had the weakest nationalist movement and the region where the autochthonous language is spoken the least, the Basque Country, gave rise to the most radical nationalism. Of course, language was an issue. The fear that Euskera, a minority language by the mid-nineteenth-century, was being swamped by Castilian as was spoken by the migrants from Spain, who came in great numbers in the last quarter of the century, was a vital concern for Basque nationalists. Hence their nationalism had a more intense cultural component than that of the Catalans, who could feel greater confidence about their own language despite the non-Catalan migrants that also flocked to their factories.

It is indeed difficult to compare the relationship between the core and periphery in Spain to that of the polyglot, multi-ethnic empires of central Europe and Eurasia. The particularism of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia does not measure up to the complexity and fragmentation of the Balkan components of the Ottoman Empire, for example. And although elites from national minorities in all three Empires collaborated with the rulers, they were not all as closely tied to the interests and culture of the core as were their counterparts in the Basque Country and Catalonia (with the exception of the Russian Ukraines). It is true that several regional elites in the Habsburg and Romanov Empires were integrated into the imperial center. But the Eurasian and European land empires had grown by enlargement and conquest and many of their component parts formed a mosaic of nations without states (especially the Habsburg and the Ottoman). Catalonia and the Basque Country had been part of the metropolis for at least two centuries before the loss of empire. Rather than nations oppressed by the center, the two regions were nations divided by social tensions that cut across identities framed by language or tradition. Both Basque and to a lesser extent Catalan nationalist history in our day tend to reinvent the past in a way suggesting the uniform oppression of their nations by the Castilian monarchy. They delineate the unbroken continuity for centuries of their national communities (and in the crudest forms in the Basque case since Cro-Magnon man) and a sustained persecution of these communities by the imperial core. The sense of continuity with the distant past was expressed by Jordi Pujol, President of the Catalan government, who declared in a speech in 1988 during the commemoration of Catalonia's millennium, "Catalonia is Carolingia. This has characterized Catalonia politically, culturally and mentally for centuries. In certain aspects it still characterizes us today."¹⁷

These historicist interpretations of the past not only ignore the recent origins of nationalism and national identity but also gloss over the complexity of the relations between core and periphery. Thus Basque particu-

larism until the end of the nineteenth century was based on local autonomy, a peculiar historical arrangement agreed between the Spanish State and Basque regional elites for the preservation of local statutes and charters. This may have been the basis on which Basque nationalism was constructed but it was decidedly localist or regionalist in origin and not a sort of protonationalism, *pace* ethnosymbolist interpretations of nation and nationalism.¹⁸

The creation of the dominant branch of Basque nationalism at the end of the century was a reaction to modernization by a conservative provincial middle class fearful of the ethnic and linguistic dilution caused by the massive influx of migrants from other parts of Spain. In its most extreme forms it adopted a sort of ethnochauvinism. Yet the cultural components of this new nationalism were an elaboration of narratives of national oppression in which there was much invention of the past and distortion of the present. The ethnic or national community supposedly awaiting arousal was highly fractured. Euskara was spoken by less than half of the Basque population and was in any case composed of three virtually distinct languages. The Basque bourgeoisie was split between the fervently pro-Spanish industrial and financial elites and a middle bourgeoisie based on a more diversified and traditional industry, some of whose representatives joined the nationalist movement and softened its radicalism.¹⁹ Thus creating an ethnically and linguistically pure national community involved dispossessing from the category of nation over half of the population living and working in the Basque Country.

Indeed, Spain provides a unique laboratory for the different manifestations of stateless nationalism of the kind that existed in the three empires. For Catalan nationalism, contrary to the fundamentalist branch of Basque nationalism admitted ethnic diversity and bilingualism. It also embraced modernity. But like the Basques, the Catalan elite was divided. Their united response to the post-1898 political crisis concealed radically different agendas. The Catalan bourgeoisie saw the nationalist movement as a means of regenerating Spain, reconstructing a decadent nation on the basis of the Catalan model of thrift and industry. The middle-class nationalists, on the other hand, sought the highest degree of autonomy if not independence from the Spanish State. And like some of the Basque nationalist literature, the Catalan "ethno-symbolists" claim the existence in the 19th century of popular nationalism or protonationalism, a sense indeed of national identity, even before the first manifestations of the Catalanist popular movement. The Catalan "modernists," on the other hand, insist that one thing is an identity based on regional and linguistic difference, another is the attribution of that difference to a nation.²⁰ A Catalan poet present at a demonstration in 1906 described the awakening of patriotism among peasants implying the pre-existence of ethnic but not the consciousness that cultural and linguistic particularism had a national dimension.²¹

In conclusion, although there are obvious and profound differences between the history of the Spanish Empire and that of the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman Empires, a number of parallels can be discerned that distinguish them from the history of the empires of North-West Europe. The most important of these is their remoteness from the centers of industry, finance and trade. The gap between the great powers in Europe and the eastern, southern and south-western periphery, or Second World, began to emerge in the 18th century and widened dramatically in the following century.²²

The unequal relationship of these peripheral states with the expansionary great powers forced them to seek alliances to ensure the security of their borders or their colonies, alliances that were vital for the survival of regimes but that sometimes bore a high price. Austria, for example, abandoned its model of coalition and balance of power diplomacy under Metternich in favor of a costly one of confrontation under Franz Josef, moving eventually to a dependence on its old enemy Prussia-Germany.²³ In the Spanish case, the international isolation in which it found itself during the 1898 war with the United States, led it to take on a colonial role in North Africa under the auspices of Great Britain that resulted in repeated military disaster, political crisis and regime change.

A second shared dilemma was the asymmetric pattern of modernization, which, among its many negative consequences, made the task of establishing legitimacy among different classes and peoples extremely difficult. In Spain, as we have seen, the state exercised only a formal authority over most regions and depended on local power brokers such as the landowner and the bishop to negotiate its edicts and taxes. In all cases, the failure of the center to stamp its legitimacy on the periphery contributed to the state's crisis or demise.

Perhaps the most striking parallel is the effect of war on sub-state nationalism, rather than on the peculiar nature of center-periphery relations. The First World War reshaped European politics, breaking up the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman Empires and propelling their component nationalisms into a rapid process of national self-determination.²⁴ Likewise, the Spanish-American War and the loss of the Empire helped to transform minority regional nationalisms in Spain into popular movements challenging the legitimacy of the state.

These parallels are such that, for all the *sui generis* features of each, it is possible to talk of a second imperial Europe, embracing the Romanov, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires as well as the other peripheral empires like Spain, interlocked with the first Europe, the dominant empires of north-western Europe.

NOTES

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The Russian–American Company as a Colonial Contractor for the Russian Empire

ILYA VINKOVETSKY

“The Russian American Company could not fail of becoming in time of so much importance that the smaller East Indian Companies of Europe would not be able to stand in competition with it.”¹

INTRODUCTION

The Russian–American Company (*Rossiisko–Amerikanskaia kompaniia*, also referred to here, for convenience’s sake, as the Company and the RAC) holds a crucial place in the history of Russia’s colonialism between its founding in 1799 and the transfer of Alaska to the United States in 1867. Literature on the formation of the RAC tends to stress its evolution from the merchant-run, Siberia-based fur trading companies that preceded it.² Yet I would stress the Company’s novelty in the Russian setting, and emphasize that only with the creation of the RAC did the Russian government commence the conscious construction of a colony in North America (“Russian America”). The Russian Empire’s government viewed the RAC as a contractor to operate the Russian American colony. This contractor functioned simultaneously as a private company and as a colonial administration in the service of the Empire.

COMPANY STRUCTURE

The Russian–American Company was chartered in 1799. It was a joint-stock company, placed under the Emperor’s protection (*pokrovitelstvo*), and granted for a period of twenty years the exclusive right to manage the resources of Russian Empire’s American colony.³ The charter was renewed twice, and the Company continued to exist until the transfer of Alaska to the United States in 1867. Any subject of the Russian Empire had the right to purchase Russian–American Company shares. In practice, the shareholders were merchants and nobles. Those shareholders who owned at least ten shares were eligible to vote in the annual general meeting of shareholders (*obshchee sobranie aktsionerov*). By majority vote, they elected four, later five, directors, who headed the Main Office (*Glavnoe pravlenie*) of the Company. These directors administered the Company’s entire business, with the assistance of the staff of the Main Office. The Main Office was in charge of

keeping the imperial government apprised of Company activities. It was also the Main Office that sent orders to the colonial administration (*kolonialnoe pravlenie*) in Russian America, which was subordinate to it.⁴

The lands claimed by the Russian Empire on the Aleutian and Kurile Islands, and along the coast of North America comprised of the Company's main territorial base. Russian America had a single administrative capital—Novo-Arkhangelsk (present-day Sitka, Alaska) from 1808 on, Kodiak prior to 1808—where the colonial administration was headquartered, and from where the colony was administered. The colony was divided into seven administrative districts (*otdely*), each with its own local office—Sitka; Kodiak; Unalaska; Atka; the Kuriles; the vast Northern District (headquartered in the Mikhailovskii redoubt), and, from 1812 to 1841, the Ross settlement in northern California.⁵ The managers of the local offices were appointed by and answered to the chief administrator (*glavnyi pravitel*, or governor) in Novo-Arkhangelsk. These local managers had their own subordinates to manage the Company's various settlements and outposts. In 1850 the RAC also opened a branch office in San Francisco, which was utilized to negotiate deals with American companies.⁶ The chief administrator, who headed the colonial administration from Novo-Arkhangelsk, oversaw all these branch offices. In 1831, the office of assistant chief administrator was created; like the chief administrator, his assistant was always a naval officer selected by Company directors from a list of qualified candidates supplied by the Naval Ministry in St. Petersburg.⁷

The RAC had a sizable infrastructure beyond Russian America. Besides the Main Office, which after 1800 was located in St. Petersburg, the Company maintained a system of branch offices throughout the country. The Kiakhtha office on the border with China was small, employing only a manager, a clerk, and several scribes, but its small size belied its significance to the Company. It was in Kiakhtha—and only in Kiakhtha until the forced opening of China's sea ports to Russian and other foreign merchant vessels in the 1840s—that the RAC could trade furs directly to the Chinese for products including tea, nankeen, and sugar. The Kiakhtha trade was important but sporadic; Chinese merchants sometimes halted purchases from the Russians without explanation. The RAC at times sold other products at Kiakhtha (Breslau cloth, for example), but the furs from America formed the bulk of its trade.⁸

Goods were shuttled to and from Kiakhtha via the Company's Irkutsk office. The Irkutsk office, much larger than the one in Kiakhtha, coordinated the Company's business network in the east of the country. The offices of Iakutsk, Okhotsk, and Kamchatka, and an agent at Tomsk were subordinated to Irkutsk. The Irkutsk office was in charge of supplying Russian America via the Siberian route, and receiving and sorting furs that arrived from America via Okhotsk and Iakutsk. The Iakutsk office hired Yakut

porters for the treacherous overpass between Irkutsk and Okhotsk. Until it was replaced by Aian, the Okhotsk office, where the ships from Russian America (and Kamchatka) arrived, bringing American furs, was in charge of counting the furs, and settling the accounts with those Company employees who returned from America and left the service of the RAC (unless they traveled on the ships directly to the Baltic, in which case their accounts were settled in St. Petersburg). The Okhotsk office also controlled the Gizhiga office, which in turn controlled the Anadyr Company, a subcontractor of the RAC that traded with the Chukchi. The Gizhiga office also purchased furs, buckskin, and clothing that the Company sent to America for sale in its colony. All these activities in Siberia were overseen from Irkutsk.

In addition to St. Petersburg and Irkutsk, the Company maintained a third major office in Moscow. The Moscow office funneled the accounts from the east of the country to St. Petersburg and purchased, on orders from St. Petersburg, much of the equipment and supplies for the Company's Siberian and American operations. It was the Moscow office that conducted most of the sales of the Company's Chinese goods and American furs on the domestic market. (The Company sold its fur products domestically at the Makarev and Irbit fairs, and in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, and sometimes Tiumen.) Other regional RAC offices – generally situated along the route between St. Petersburg and Okhotsk – were responsible primarily for maintaining the Company's extensive communication and transportation network for people, furs, and materiel. The business of the hiring of various local coachmen, boat operators and other workers occupied such offices as Kazan, Tiumen, and others.⁹

Thus, the Company had an expansive structure. Communication delays between the Main Office and its far-flung agents and offices were a persistent concern. In view of this concern, it is interesting to note, as Moisei Alperovich does, that the initiative for the move of the Company's Main Office from Irkutsk to St. Petersburg, which took place in 1800, came from the important Shelikhov merchant family and its supporters.¹⁰ Aside from moving the RAC closer to the Empire's government in a geographical as well as literal sense, this transfer enabled the Company to undertake a number of projects that would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to conduct from Irkutsk. The most far-reaching of these undertakings were attracting the nobility to join the ranks of the Company's shareholders and coordinating the round-the-world voyages linking Kronshadt and Novo-Arkhangelsk. By leaving Irkutsk, the directors of the RAC were distancing themselves from the Kiakhta trade, but they were hoping to compensate for that distancing by opening up maritime trade with Canton. The move of the Main Office from Irkutsk to St. Petersburg is often used to argue the opposite point—as evidence for a government takeover

of the Company—but it should not be overlooked that the involvement of nobles, not to mention of the Emperor and his family, in the fortunes of the RAC greatly enhanced the Company's credibility in the eyes of the state. Moreover, giving the nobility and the courtiers an opportunity for a financial stake in the Company through the joint-stock model, as had been the practice in Great Britain, was a consequential business decision.¹¹ In addition, the move to St. Petersburg signaled a new emphasis within the Company on the maritime route rather than the continental, a new link between the interests of the RAC and the Imperial Navy, and grand ambitions that reached far beyond the borders of northern Eurasia and Russian America.

OVERSEAS COLONIZATION FOR A CONTINENTAL EMPIRE

The setting of Alaska elicited unprecedented strategies and practices from the designers and implementers of the Russian Empire's colonial policies.¹² As the one and only overseas colony of an empire situated on a vast contiguous landmass, Russian America posed new challenges, different from those of Siberia, for example.¹³ Russia's sole overseas colony served for St. Petersburg as a laboratory for trying out governance, social policy and economic approaches that were not pursued elsewhere in Russia's far-flung empire.¹⁴

The Russian government came up with a governance arrangement for Alaska that reflected its desire to emulate the colonial success of one of Russia's chief geopolitical rivals, the British Empire.¹⁵ The Company's very name suggested that Russia's imperial planners consciously modeled it on Western European joint-stock charter companies, including Britain's East India Company (EIC) and Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The idea of an ostensibly commercial company managing territory and populace on behalf of an empire appealed to imperial planners who believed that this arrangement amounted to a cost-effective form of colonialism and provided a convenient scapegoat in case of failure.¹⁶ The creation of the RAC, under a charter that was adapted from Western practices, would not have been feasible without the Russian Empire's conscious turn to Western models, accelerated by Peter I and continued thereafter. Under the oversight of the RAC, the governance of Russian America followed its own logic and process of development that was largely, although not entirely, independent of the various administrative reforms within the Russian Empire as a whole.¹⁷ The effects of Empire-wide reforms, such as those of Mikhail Speranskii in the early 1820s and the Great Reforms of the 1850s–1860s, played out differently in Russian America than in most parts of Eurasia.

Although the Russian–American Company can be regarded in fundamental ways as *both* a business venture and an agency of Russia's government, it was never simply an “auxiliary of the Imperial Russian government,”

as has sometimes been claimed.¹⁸ First and foremost, from beginning to end, the RAC actively and sometimes aggressively sought out opportunities to turn a profit and pay dividends to its shareholders, a growing number of whom were nobles rather than merchants. To be sure, the government kept vigilant oversight over the Company's activities. The Company was required to submit regular reports to government officials, and to receive and execute governmental decrees. But governments of other European powers imposed similar restrictions on their charter companies. For example, the British government monitored the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Colonial Office desired the amalgamation of the HBC with the North West Company in 1821, and exerted pressure on the boards of both companies to bring it about; the amalgamation took place, despite the strong reservations of HBC directors.¹⁹ Interference by various governments in the affairs of companies that they chartered to take care of "their" territory was a common colonial practice; the existence of all these companies was always conditional on the central government's favor. That said, what is surprising—especially considering the same setting of early nineteenth-century Russia—is the leeway that the Russian–American Company actually did get from the Russian government in conducting its affairs.

Organizationally, the mechanisms that the Russian government applied to oversee the governance of Russian America differed substantially from the way that it kept oversight over the provincial (*guberniia*) governments within continental Russia. In 1811, the RAC was placed under the oversight of the Division of Industry and Domestic Commerce, which was at the time a part of the Ministry of the Interior. However, in 1819, that division was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Finance. Thus, from that time on, the RAC was under the oversight of the Minister of Finance. The government's expectation that the Company was to run its business, including the American colony, at a profit, was confirmed by the Company's place within the bureaucratic apparatus.

In view of how the Russian–American Company operated, I argue that it is most productive to view it as a *contractor* of the Russian imperial government. As a contractor, the RAC received twenty-year contracts (the charters of 1799, 1821, and 1844) to manage territory and resources claimed by the Russian state on the Northern Pacific Rim beyond the Kamchatka shore. The RAC was obligated to operate for the state's gain as well as its own. Whenever the contracts came up for renewal (the late 1810s, early 1840s, and early 1860s), various interest groups competed for influence in determining the colonial domain's future, and the Company had to defend its interests. It was especially in those times, when the terms of the charters—and indeed the question of their legitimacy and continuation—were debated in the halls of power, that the nature of the relationship between the government and the contractor came into the open.

THE MODEL

There was logic to the Russian Empire's entrusting its overseas colony to a commercial (or at least semi-commercial) contractor. At the time that the Russian-American Company was chartered in 1799, Russians were embroiled in an intensifying competition for the fur resources of southeastern Alaska against British and American rivals. The several Russian merchant-run commercial fur-trading companies then in the North Pacific were competing with one another and all had limited resources. Influenced by mercantilist considerations, supporters of the creation of a single monopolistic company, including the members of the *kommerts-kollegiia* in St. Petersburg, articulated the advantage of unifying the resources of these competing companies, and fortifying the Russian presence in the North Pacific fur trade with government support.²⁰ The model of a charter company, already implemented by Great Britain, among other European powers, existed for Russians to emulate. Not only were the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company contemporary examples of successful charter companies, but the Russians were also familiar with the experience of the Muscovy Company, which had opened up trade between England and Russia in Arkhangelsk in the sixteenth century. The charter company model had a long history in Western Europe, with the Netherlands and France also employing the scheme to conduct various colonial and commercial projects.

The attraction of such a model was that it reduced the costs and risks of practicing colonialism. The charter company took on the responsibilities of running colonial affairs; the state treasury and economy received benefits without sharing all of the risks. In a joint-stock arrangement, the capital for running the company was provided by private shareholders, which also divided the profits. Of course, the state treasury collected the taxes and could also impose other obligations on the company that netted additional revenue for the state. This way of running a distant colonial domain allowed the state to conserve resources.

The Russians could see that the charter company model was employed by Western European governments to manage colonial fur resources. The Hudson's Bay Company, for example, was widely perceived to be a successful venture. The British government kept contracting more and more powers to the HBC. Most dramatically, in 1821, as the British government gave the newly amalgamated HBC exclusive trading rights west of Rupert's Land, it "placed upon the fur trade the responsibility for maintaining order in the territory, a function the British government was not willing to assume.... Within the tremendous extent of land west of Canada, the Hudson's Bay Company was thereafter to be the British authority."²¹ The charter company was a convenient mask—when needed, the state could distance itself from its activities, or, on the contrary, embrace them, depending on the interests of the day. From the state's point of view, the

charter company could be directed—or ordered—to acquire new territories; if the acquisition was successful, the state gained new land. The charter company could be entrusted by the state to conduct a sensitive mission: if the mission succeeded, the state could claim credit; if it failed, the state could wash its hands of the matter, and point the finger at the “independent” company.

The deliberate ambiguity in the relationship between the RAC and the government, and between the Russian overseas colony and the Russian Empire, offered both advantages and drawbacks to imperial and colonial planners. Voices were raised throughout the history of Russian America about the need to bring coherence to colonial rule. The history of Russia’s claims to the Northern Pacific Rim, the subsequent activity of various merchant-run companies, and then the founding and the increasing bureaucratization of the RAC fits the general pattern of colonialism as it is characterized by Jürgen Osterhammel—as a history of gradual emergence of state structures within nominally claimed regions.²² This was a protracted process. Among other problems, the colony lacked judges and courts, and people charged with many common crimes had to be shipped to Russia for trial. In the late 1810s, Governor Leontii Gagemeister voiced the need to formulate colonial civil laws, but despite the regulations spelled out in the Company’s charters and various decrees, much would remain undefined to the very end.²³ The governor and his staff had considerable discretion to interpret and shape local order. This discretion was an important reason why the personal attributes of a particular governor were perhaps more consequential in Russian America than they may have been in most Russian provinces – and yet less consequential than in British, French, or Dutch colonies.

AMBITIONS

The name “Russian–American Company” conceals as much as it reveals. From its inception, the Company was poised to conduct business not only in America but also throughout the Far East. To Russia’s imperial planners, commercial goals did not contradict those of empire-building and colonialism.²⁴ Years before the RAC was formed, the merchant Grigorii Shelikhov (1748–1795), in parallel to what he wanted to do in colonizing America, had other ambitious projects in mind: he sought the government’s permission to send trading vessels to Canton, Macao, and the Philippines, among other places. Even at that early time, Shelikhov also proposed that the Russian Empire make use of his company to explore the Amur River (then under Chinese control).²⁵ Iurii Lisianskii, who commanded one of the two ships participating in Russia’s first circumnavigation voyage (1803–1806), predicted in his shipboard journal that Novo-Arkhangelsk would become the center of Russian America, and noted with approval and antic-

ipation: "The woods will also yield a handsome revenue, when the Russian commerce with China is established."²⁶ The question was when, not if. In the minds of Russia's imperial visionaries of the first half of Alexander the first's reign, Russian America was but a piece of a far larger puzzle, in which China and Japan were to figure far more prominently. Nikolai Rezanov's primary assignment on Russia's first round-the-world voyage was to be the Russian emperor's emissary to Japan, with the aim of establishing trade; Ivan Kruzenshtern's was to negotiate the terms for opening up the port of Canton to Russian ships. When the circumnavigation party arrived back in St. Petersburg in the summer of 1806, the Company held an urgent unscheduled general meeting of shareholders to welcome back its shipboard representative; the shareholders were most keen to learn about the business transacted in Canton.²⁷

Commercial and patriotic motives were powerfully fused in the early years of the RAC. Indeed, the initiative for Russia's first round-the-world voyage came, to the largest degree, from a naval officer who went on to command that voyage—Ivan Kruzenshtern. Kruzenshtern's proposal for the circumnavigation voyage was linked to his passionate plea for the Russian government to actively support the country's merchants. "It was requisite again to ennoble the merchant in the eyes of the nation," wrote Kruzenshtern, crediting Peter the Great with the initiation of this ennoblement project.²⁸ Appealing to a vision of economic patriotism, Kruzenshtern went on to argue that the government of Alexander I was in a unique position to cap Peter's achievement:

"It is reserved for the present enlightened government to put the last hand to the improvement of the people which Peter the Great set on foot: and it is now time for us to throw off the yoke imposed on our commerce by foreigners, who, having acquired wealth at the expense of our country, quit the empire to spend it in their own; and in this manner withdraw from the state that capital which it would preserve, if the native possessed any means by which his energy and patriotism might be animated and employed to the advantage of his country. This energy, this patriotism, they can only be inspired with, in a country which like Russia depends on the will of a single person, by its ruler; and in this the government of our present excellent monarch, who employs his power solely for the advantage of his subjects, and gives daily proofs of his humanity and zeal for the welfare and reputation of his country, is particularly to be distinguished."²⁹

In Kruzenshtern's vision, Russia's merchants became heroic front-line soldiers in economic warfare against foreigners seeking to exploit Russia for their native countries' benefit. He perceived a new meaning in Russia's possessions in the Far East: "The possession of Kamchatka, and of the Aleutic isles contributes, perhaps, to rouse Russia from that state of slum-

ber in which the policy of the commercial nations of Europe has ever, and with too much success, endeavoured to lull her.”³⁰ Kruzenshtern wanted to counter this foreign commercial conspiracy against Russia by the same means that were employed by Russia’s rivals. Thus, he argued passionately for the vital importance of maritime trade to Russia’s development, all the while emphasizing lessons to be drawn from British activity in Asia: “During the time that I was serving in the English navy in the revolutionary war of 1793 to 1799,” he wrote, “my attention was particularly excited by the importance of the English trade with the East Indies and with China.”³¹ “It appeared to me by no means impossible for Russia to participate in the trade by sea with China and the Indies,” Kruzenshtern went on, adding: “Most of the European nations which have any commerce by sea, had more or less share in the trade with these countries, so rich in all kinds of natural productions; and those which have particularly cultivated it, have always arrived at a high degree of wealth.”³²

Calling for vigorous government involvement and investment to support Russia’s merchants in building up foreign trade, Kruzenshtern specifically emphasized the development of better ships, ship commanders, and sailors as projects in which the government could assist private enterprise.³³ He considered the dearth of men with experience on the eastern seas and capable of commanding merchant vessels to be Russia’s biggest obstacles in Asian trade. While he was serving his apprenticeship in the British navy, Kruzenshtern had made a point of traveling to India (in 1797) and then to China. During his stay in Canton in 1798–1799, he saw a British ship delivering furs from America’s Northwest Coast, a territory claimed but not controlled by the Russian Empire. The appearance of this vessel and cargo prompted Kruzenshtern to think about why the Russians were not conducting the same voyages, and gaining handsome profits in the process.³⁴

Kruzenshtern had in mind the development of a professional merchant marine for the Russian Empire. He argued that Russia’s commoners should be trained to serve aboard commercial ships.³⁵ The proposal to involve commoners (as opposed to merchants or military sailors) in Russia’s foreign trade in faraway oceans was innovative for its time. Characteristically, Kruzenshtern pointed to British and French examples to support his argument: Cook, Bougainvillea and Nelson, he argued, could not have become what they were able to become if attention had been paid only to the estate of their birth. Kruzenshtern’s merchant marine plan called for Russia’s commercial fleet to transport North American furs directly from North America to Canton, ship Chinese goods to Russia, and make stops in various foreign ports.³⁶ “I consider an uninterrupted communication between the European ports of Russia and the Company’s American colonies, and particularly the commerce with Canton, as the only means of bringing the trade of the Russian American Company into a thriving state,” he wrote.³⁷

Investment and activity in the Pacific, Kruzenshtern argued, would bring a sizable dividend to the Company and the Empire:

“In this manner it would no longer be necessary to pay every year large sums to England, Sweden and Denmark for East Indian and Chinese goods, and Russia would soon be in a condition to supply the north of Germany with them at a lower rate than either of those nations, as their preparations are much more expensive than ours, and they for the most part can only carry on this trade with specie.”³⁸

Kruzenshtern dreamed of a wholesale reordering of Russia's colonial priorities. The realization of his vision required far more attention, social reform, and funding than the Russian imperial government would ever be willing to provide, and, therefore, although Kruzenshtern counted Count Nikolai Rumiantsev and Admiral Nikolai Mordvinov among his powerful supporters, the grander schemes of his proposal were destined to fail.³⁹ On the other hand, the round-the-world voyage that Kruzenshtern so ardently campaigned for did come about. Moreover, Kruzenshtern's project to inspire the government to design the RAC in such a way that it would “ennoble” Russian commerce succeeded to a degree, if the “ennoblement” is conceived in a metaphorical sense. Like the joint-stock companies of Great Britain, the RAC was consciously designed to involve Russia's nobles in international commerce, as Company stockholders.⁴⁰ Kruzenshtern was also successful in his project of presenting to the Russian elite the Company's commercial activity as prestigious and desirable for the country's as well as for personal gain.

APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

The close connection between the government and the company was a fixture of the joint-stock charter company model on which the RAC would be based. Predictably, considering the Russian imperial setting, the RAC seems to have been under more rigorous and direct government oversight than the HBC, its British rival. Russia's government devised a Council to oversee the Company's political activity in 1804; in 1813 that body was made permanent.⁴¹ The Council contained representatives of the Naval Ministry, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of the Interior. In addition to submitting regular reports, the Company was obligated to report to the Ministry of Finance or the Emperor himself on anything that could conceivably affect Russia's general interests. Over the years, the growing body of restrictions and obligations certainly hampered the Company's agility in running its business. One of the impositions by the government on the Company's conduct of business was the requirement, in force after 1818, that the governor of Russian America had to be an officer of the

Russian navy. In the judgment of a prominent official of the Hudson's Bay Company, Russian naval officers were "a class of men ignorant of and by their previous habits of life, the most unqualified to manage commercial undertakings."⁴² Even though some of these officers, particularly those who had had prior experience in Russian America before their appointments as governors, performed their jobs fairly well, the requirement itself, along with the five-year terms of service that allowed the newcomers little time to master the tasks of the governorship, restricted the pool of candidates for what had to be one of the most demanding occupations in the Empire. Encroaching impositions on the Company's authority hampered the RAC's ability to operate as a successful business. Still, it is important to note that the Council was in charge of the Company's political but not its commercial affairs, and that only until 1844. After 1844, the RAC Main Office was so thoroughly dominated by military and bureaucratic officials that the Council was disbanded because it was viewed as superfluous.⁴³ But whether or not these bureaucrats were good businessmen, they were charged by the government to assist the Company in conducting its commercial affairs. Moreover, the 1844 charter specifically required that they be Company shareholders and be well versed in both commercial affairs and colonial affairs.⁴⁴ The RAC retained its identity as a commercial company—and although the Company sometimes received monetary infusions from the state, in a kind of a nineteenth-century version of *khozraschet*, it was expected to operate the North American colony, and the rest of its business, at a profit.

In this regard, it is telling that the RAC consistently resisted expenditures imposed on it by the state. With various degrees of success, the RAC opposed the opening of most new Orthodox Church missions, because maintaining them cost the Company money.⁴⁵ It is also illustrative that, aside from southeastern Alaska (and that limited largely to Novo-Arkhangelsk and the Ozerskii redoubt), the period of RAC rule in Russian America (1799–1867) did not yield much *sustained* territorial acquisition. The Company had opportunities to make territorial advances, at least in the early years. But the emphasis was on acquiring furs, not land, because it was the furs that brought revenue.

This emphasis on profit-making was sustained after the governorship of Russian America passed from Aleksandr Baranov (a merchant who served as the colony's governor from before the Company's establishment until 1818) to the naval officers. Leontii Gagemeister, Baranov's successor (January–October 1818), wrote to St. Petersburg that: "Advantage and profit of the company depends vitally on increasing the hunting of fur-bearing animals, and not on the increase in land."⁴⁶ His message hardly came as a revelation to the Company's Main Office; the RAC was always searching for ways to be more profitable, and at the time that Gagemeister was writing his report, the Company's officials were contemplating instituting various

incentives to make Native fur-hunters more productive.⁴⁷ Keeping in mind the Company expenses, Gagemeister reasoned that it would be best to have as few Russians in the colony as possible.⁴⁸ He stressed that Company schools should focus on teaching Creole and Aleut children those skills that would make them most useful to the Company's business.⁴⁹ Some twenty years later, Governor Etolin again sought to increase the Company's efficiency by reducing the number of Russian employees in the colony.⁵⁰ His administration's campaign to entice independent natives—mainly Tlingits—to substantially increase trade with the RAC was part and parcel of the same drive to increase efficiency and profitability.

The Company was not merely interested in having American furs go *to Russia* (and into Russia's economy)—it was interested in gaining profit *for itself* from every one of those furs. The diversion of Alaskan furs to the Chukotka peninsula at the tip of Siberia—where they often ended up in the hands of the Company's Siberian business competitors—was a nagging concern for the RAC. The Company was alarmed by the presence of a Native trade network across the Bering Strait, whereby American furs were exported to Siberia, bypassing the RAC. One of the main reasons that Lavrentii Zagoskin's expedition was sent by the Company to the interior of Alaska in the early 1840s was to trace the route by which these furs ended up in Chukotka.⁵¹ This initiative by the RAC demonstrates yet again that it had its own interests, quite apart from—or on top of—the interests of the Russian State in general. In the late decades of the Company's existence, it was more successful in diversifying, shifting its business away from dealing in furs. Finally achieving a long-sought objective, the Company gained access to Chinese ports in the wake of the Opium Wars of the early 1840s, and began to import substantial quantities of tea into Russia from China by sea. Beginning in the 1850s, the RAC accounted for 30 per cent of all the sea-borne Chinese tea imported into Russia. The tea-trade became the Company's chief source of income. According to Semen Okun, the RAC's gross receipts between 1857 and 1861 averaged 952,275 rubles, silver, annually, of which 421,912 rubles came from tea.⁵²

What is more revealing about the decline of the fur business is that in those years the Company apparently made more money from marking up the price of merchandise it imported and sold to the Russians, Creoles, and Natives in Russian America (301,030 rubles per year) than it did from the sale of furs (208,682 rubles).⁵³ The RAC had become primarily a tea importer (from China), and the American colony was now de-emphasized as a relatively minor, and not all that profitable, portion of its business. Operating the colony was expensive; in order to extract revenue from its investment, the Company took aggressive advantage of its monopolistic position as a supplier of essential goods to its "captive" labor force.

All the while, Company-sponsored publications and official reports were full of assertions of the RAC's eager concern for the Empire's well-

being, and its conscientious attention to the colonial tasks and imperial tasks assigned to it by the government. It should not come as a surprise that the Company would be quick to boast about the support it gave to the Empire's cause in its publications meant for the audience of St. Petersburg decision-makers.⁵⁴ Sergei Kan argues persuasively that one of the most important elements of the RAC's success in wooing the Tlingit Indians—when it was able to woo them—was learning to show them proper “respect.”⁵⁵ It is not out of place to point out that in the context of the Russian Empire, the Company and its advocates were likewise obligated, even compelled, to repeatedly demonstrate respect to the Emperor and the entire imperial order. Among other things, this demonstration of respect involved using proper rhetoric, for example by tempering business ambitions and emphasizing advantages for the Empire as a whole (as opposed to Company shareholders) in Company documents. Thus, it is not surprising that when the RAC asked the government for permission to establish a trading post in Haiti, and lobbied for a tariff exemption on goods it was planning to import into Russia from there, its spokesmen and allies repeatedly stressed how beneficial such an exemption would be for Russia's welfare. Even Admiral Nikolai Mordvinov was brought in to write on the Company's behalf. In brief, the Company was asking the government for the right to import colonial products from Haiti to Russia without a tariff so as to protect itself from losses in a new untested market. The admiral suggested giving the RAC a ten-year-long tariff exemption. The Company's proposal prominently cited British commercial policy as a proper example to follow; the idea was that granting certain privileges in the short term could pay off handsomely for the government treasury in the long run. The proposal repeatedly emphasized that Russia's welfare, not mere Company interests, were at stake.⁵⁶ The RAC's directors, it would seem, were more concerned with Russia's future than with their Company's gain. “The American Company is not asking for exclusive commercial rights in the Haiti trade,” they emphasized. “It recognizes the necessity of granting these rights to all who want to use their capital to extend Russia's trade beyond the limits by which it is now bound.”⁵⁷ Emphasizing that the RAC served Russia's state interests and not merely its own commercial ones was deemed necessary by the writers of this proposal precisely because they were cognizant of the fact that the Company was perceived in St. Petersburg as a semi-independent commercial enterprise with its own agenda that did not necessarily match the government's aims. Their rhetoric was aimed at countering these perceptions.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the Russian–American Company was a complex institutional actor, with a split personality as a colonial administration in the service of the Russian Empire and a commercial enterprise in the service of share-

holders. This latter point has often been de-emphasized in the literature on Russian America, both in the West and in Russia. My intent has been to show that Company and government officials of the nineteenth century viewed the RAC as an entity distinct from the rest of the Empire's apparatus. In this regard, the RAC was not so different from the Western colonial companies on which it was modeled. The history of the RAC in Russian America in particular and the North Pacific in general constitutes an important stage in the development of Russian colonialism. And yet there was a large gap between the RAC's ambitions and its achievements. The dreams of visionaries like Kruzenshtern and Rezanov spoke to a much more ambitious vision of both Company and Empire than what came to pass.

NOTES

- 1 [A. J. Krusenstern,] *Voyage round the world, in the years 1803, 1804, 1805, & 1806, by order of His Imperial Majesty Alexander the First, on board the ships Nadezhda and Neva, under the command of Captain A. J. von Krusenstern*, vol. 1 (London: J. Murray, 1813), xxviii–xxix.
- 2 See A. Iu. Petrov, *Obrazovanie Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii* (Moscow: "Nauka," 2000); idem., "Obrazovanie Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii" in N. N. Bolkhovitinov, ed., *Istoriia Russkoi Ameriki*, vol. 1 (Moscow: "Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia," 1997–1999), 322–63; Mary E. Wheeler, "The Origins of the Russian–American Company," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 14: 4 (December 1966): 485–94.
- 3 See *Rossiisko-Amerikanskaia kompaniia i izuchenie Tikhookeanskogo severa, 1799–1815. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: "Nauka," 1994), 17–22.
- 4 B. Dmytryshyn, "The Administrative Apparatus of the Russian–American Company, 1798–1867," *Canadian–American Slavic Studies* 28:1 (Spring 1994): 39; idem., "Introduction" in B. Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan, Th. Vaughan, eds., *To Siberia and Russian America: Three Centuries of Russian Expansion*, vol. 3 (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1988–1989), xxxvii.
- 5 Ibid., vol. 3, xl.
- 6 Ibid., lxviii–lxix.
- 7 B. Dmytryshyn, "Administrative Apparatus," p. 29.
- 8 "An Historical Calendar of the Russian–American Company (1817)" in *Documents on the History of the Russian–American Company* (Kingston, Ont.: Lime-stone Press, 1976), 33.
- 9 Ibid., 31–40.
- 10 M. S. Al'perovich, *Rossiiia i Novyi Svet (poslednaia chast' XVIII veka)* (Moscow: "Nauka," 1993), 201–202.
- 11 S. R. H. Jones, S. P. Ville, "Efficient Transactors or Rent-Seeking Monopolists? The Rationale for Early Chartered Trading Companies," *The Journal of Economic History* 56: 4 (December 1996): 913.
- 12 Russia was a vast continental empire, fundamentally different from the overseas empires analyzed in D.B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415–1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
- 13 For a classic interpretation of Siberia as Russia's "colony," see especially N. M. Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha,

- 1882). For interpretations of Russia as an empire, see D. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), A. Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1992), and J. P. LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700–1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 14 For use of the term “imperial laboratory,” see S. Frederick Starr, “Tsarist Government: The Imperial Dimension,” in J. R. Azrael, ed., *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices* (New York: Praeger, 1978), 30.
- 15 On the British Empire, see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2000* (London: Longman, 2001), C. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London: Longman, 1989), and D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 16 See S. G. Fedorova, *Russkoe naselenie Alaski i Kalifornii: konets XVIII veka–1867 god* (Moscow: “Nauka,” 1971), p. 122.
- 17 To be sure, the Russian Empire was never a coherent, centralized whole in terms of administration, as numerous other “exceptions” (including Finland, Poland, later Central Asia, etc.) make clear. Be that as it may, rule by a commercial company (the RAC) distinguished Russian America from all of them.
- 18 The notion that the RAC was “an important auxiliary of the Imperial Russian government” has been advanced most forcefully in “Introduction,” *To Siberia and Russian America*, vol. 3, xxxiv; see also B. Dmytryshyn, “Administrative Apparatus,” 52.
- 19 J. S. Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821–1869* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), 6–8.
- 20 S. B. Okun’, *Rossiisko-amerikanskaia kompaniia* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoe izdatel’stvo, 1939), 39–40.
- 21 J. S. Galbraith, op. cit., 8.
- 22 J. Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 28.
- 23 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 838, l. 4.
- 24 In this regard, the RAC was hardly different from British joint-stock companies. See P. J. Cain, A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas. I. The Old Colonial System, 1688–1850,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series 39: 4 (November 1986): 520.
- 25 S. B. Okun’, op. cit. 35.
- 26 U. Lisiansky, *A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1803, 4, 5, and 6* (London: J. Booth, 1814), 236.
- 27 “Zapiski prikashchika Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii N. I. Korobitsyna, 1795–1807 gg.,” in A. I. Andreev, ed., *Russkie otkrytiia v Tikhom Okeane i Severnoi Amerike v XVIII–XIX vekakh*, (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1944), 211.
- 28 A. J. Krusenstern, vol. 1, xiii.
- 29 Ibid., vol. 1, xiii.
- 30 Ibid., vol. 1, 4.
- 31 Ibid., vol. 1, xxiv.
- 32 Ibid., vol. 1, xxv.
- 33 Ibid., vol. 1, xix.
- 34 Ibid., vol. 1, xxv–xxvi.
- 35 Ibid., vol. 1, xxvi–xxvii.
- 36 Ibid., vol. 1, xxvii–xxviii.

- 37 Ibid., vol. 1, xxviii footnote.
38 Ibid., vol. 1, xxviii–xxix.
39 Ibid., vol. 1, xxxi.
40 S. R. H. Jones, S. P. Ville, “Efficient Transactors or Rent-Seeking Monopolists?,” 913.
41 “Introduction,” *To Siberia*, vol. 3, xxxvi–xxxvii.
42 James Douglas quoted in J.S. Galbraith, op. cit., 115.
43 W. Lee Sarafian, *Russian–American Company Employee Policies and Practices, 1799–1867*, Ph.D. diss., University of California Los Angeles (1971), 4.
44 B. Dmytryshyn, “Administrative Apparatus,” 41.
45 RGIA, f. 797, op. 19, d. 42,968, l. 2ob.
46 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 838, l. 1.
47 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 838, l. 1ob.
48 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 838, ll. 2–2ob.
49 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 838, l. 3.
50 *Otchet Glavnogo Pravleniia RAK za 1840–1841 gg.*, 56.
51 H. N. Michael, ed., *Lieutenant Zagoskin’s Travels in Russian America, 1842–1844: The First Ethnographic and Geographic Investigations in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Valleys of Alaska* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 82.
52 S. Okun, *The Russian–American Company* (New York: Octagon Books, 1979), 232.
53 Ibid.
54 *Kratkoe istoricheskoe obozrenie obrazovaniia i deistvii*, 84–85.
55 S. Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Christianity, 1794–1994* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 57, 71–72.
56 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 853.
57 RGIA, f. 994, op. 2, d. 853.

The Comparative Ecology of Complex Frontiers

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The advance and defense of frontiers has always played a central role in the destiny of continental, Eurasian conquest empires. Frontier maintenance absorbed large resources, influenced the evolution of imperial ideologies and institutions and largely defined relations with the external world. Attempts to consolidate and incorporate frontiers into the imperial body politic left a tripartite legacy to both the peoples and the nation states that emerged following the retreat and collapse of the Eurasian Empires during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first legacy was a tradition of violence and instability that characterized the histories of the frontiers along the peripheries of both the old empires and the successor states. A second legacy was the “great nation” complex. Successor states particularly in Eastern Europe expressed vague aspirations occasionally embedded in concrete policies aimed at reestablishing historic boundaries irrespective of ethnic identities or else incorporating all members of their nationality however widely dispersed among other states. Either way they reproduced some of the same internal tensions of the defunct empires. A third legacy was the syndrome of the divided nation. The breakup of empires did not lead to re-drawing their boundaries along national lines. The Ukrainian, Armenian, Kurdish, Azeri, Uighur and Mongol peoples, to name the most prominent, remained divided as they had been under imperial rule. In short the end of Eurasian Empires did not solve the problems of advancing, fixing and defending frontiers throughout the region. It is not surprising then that in the twentieth century both world wars and a number of smaller ones (Russo-Japanese, two Balkan Wars, Yugoslav war) had their immediate origins in the competition over the geo-cultural space along the margin of the multi-cultural empires of Eurasia and the successor states that emerged from their dissolution.

This chapter seeks to reassess the role of Eurasian frontiers in the rise and fall of empires as a means of reinterpreting two major interpretive schemes. The first is a clutch of myths about the unique expansionist and messianic character of certain imperial traditions. The second is the concept of “clash of civilizations.”¹

It should be immediately clear that I am dealing with a number of contested terms: empire, Eurasia and frontiers. I cannot pretend let alone aspire to provide a universally acceptable definition of any of the three. But I can suggest what they mean within the small universe of this essay. This I propose to do by exploring changing contours of their inter-relatedness over the course of an entire historical epoch beginning in the fifteenth century. The following set of preliminary markers suggests openings in the definitional thicket. By Eurasia I mean that vast geo-cultural arena shaped by the encounter of nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary populations that stretches from the plains of central Europe and the mountains of south-eastern Europe to the highlands of Manchuria.² In this chapter Eurasian Empires include the Russian, Habsburg, Ottoman, Iranian and Chinese, that is multicultural, bureaucratic state systems ruled by an autocratic, quasi-divine figure that emerged from the geo-cultural encounters of nomadic and sedentary peoples.³ Frontier (as distinct from linear boundary) signifies space, process and symbol. In all three aspects it is a dynamic concept that changes under historical circumstances. Spatially it encompasses the contested lands between the rival empires; as process it constitutes the movement of peoples through colonization, resettlement, and deportation. In Eurasia frontiers symbolically represent the dividing line between civilization and barbarism, sites of religious or ideological mission, cradles of heroic myths.⁴

The central argument of this chapter suggests that the interplay of physical geography, warfare and cultural change shaped frontiers over a prolonged period into an ecological system that fully justifies the use of the term "complex." The most salient features of this system may be summarized as follows, with the understanding that it will then be necessary to sketch their evolution over time and their relationship to one another in specific historical contexts. 1) Complex frontiers were military contest zones where at least three polities, although not always the same set, competed for political and economic domination. As a result state boundary lines were frequently unclear, unstable, and porous. 2) Endemic warfare on the frontiers swept over wide spaces but returned with remarkable regularity to center on a fortress, an oasis, a river valley that provided the strategic key to an entire region. 3) The complex frontiers long continued to be the arena of trading and raiding by nomadic or semi-nomadic and settled populations even after the historical reversal of power relationships between steppe and sedentary societies and the incorporation of nomads into the imperial system. 4) Large scale population movements resulting from warfare, invasions, migrations and colonization, both coercive and voluntary, had the dual effect of scattering ethno-cultural groups on opposite sides of state boundaries and jumbling them together in a kaleidoscope (mosaic would be too static a metaphor) of peoples all along the complex frontiers. 5). Following their subjugation to imperial rule the populations of the

complex displayed ambiguous loyalties toward superordinate authority. Depending on cultural and social differences the conquered people's reactions ranged over a broad spectrum from rebellion to acculturation but the continued existence of ethno-territorial blocs on the peripheries of empires created internal frontiers between them and the core regions dominated by the hegemonic cultural group. 6) Confronted by the imagined and real threats to stability and security of the imperial order posed by the persistent problems of complex frontiers, the ruling elite employed a variety of policies oscillating between concessions and repression in order to win over or subdue the local populations.

In Eurasia the shift in the power relationships between the nomadic and sedentary populations was everywhere gradual and discontinuous, marked by temporary reversals and resulting at times with symbiotic results. Into the 1590s the Crimean Tatars raided deeply into central Russia and even burned the suburbs of Moscow. During the Time of Troubles the Cossacks, themselves semi-nomadic offspring of steppe warfare almost destroyed the Muscovite state. In 1529 Vienna was besieged by the Turks, who were also progeny of the steppes undergoing a transformation into a bureaucratic empire.⁵ In 1644 the Manchus overwhelmed the Sung Empire. In the mid-18th century the Afghans destroyed the Safavid Empire in Iran. But in the long run the nomads were either defeated, incorporated or transformed by their conquest of sedentary populations into imperial rulers themselves. When the nomads lost control over their grazing lands based on traditional tribal rights and unrestricted by formal boundaries, they lost their independence to the superior organizational and military power of the multi-cultural, bureaucratic empires. It was not so much the gunpowder revolution, although that played a role in the final stages of the victories over the mounted warrior. The real difference came with the slow but steady advance of agricultural settlements and the improvement of administrative and financial institutions that provided the new empires with the instruments to mobilize and supply large and increasingly professional armies. The decline of the nomadic power did not end the territorial conflicts in Eurasia. It merely signaled a new phase of imperial rivalries. The millennium of nomad domination left behind a legacy of frontier maintenance that complicated the relations among the competing Eurasian Empires.

The task of establishing clear and stable boundaries that is fundamental to the security of any state posed special difficulties for the Eurasian Empires. First, the ethno-linguistic core population upon which the rulers mainly relied—whether German–Austrian, Great Russian, Turkic, Persian or Han Chinese—was concentrated in the central provinces and more thinly represented toward the outer reaches, the margins of imperial control. Periodically, the central authorities encouraged or promoted colonization for reasons of security. But these efforts often created as many problems as they solved.⁶ Second, the frontiers themselves inhabited by mixed populations

and under permanent military threat required special treatment. Administration, tariffs and taxation, cultural policies including degrees of religious and linguistic toleration all raised serious questions concerning the centralized authority of the ruler and his bureaucracy. Thirdly, the defense and/or expansion of the frontiers placed increasingly heavy financial and manpower burdens on the empires that posed hard choices concerning the allocation of resources.

In order to illustrate the differences as well as similarities among different stretches of the complex frontiers, this essay concentrates on five sections. To give them their approximate territorial location followed by the main contenders for domination, they are the western Balkans (Venice, Habsburgs, Ottomans), the Pontic steppe (Poles, Turks, Russians), the Caucasian isthmus (Ottomans, Iranians, Russians), and two Inner Asian frontiers, Xinjiang (Mongols, Chinese, Russians) and the Ordos-Liao line (Mongols, Manchus, Chinese). To be sure within each section the relative importance of the contenders has shifted and in some cases the intensity of the military conflicts and culture clashes have declined. But the complex frontiers have displayed a remarkable persistence even well beyond the dissolution of the multi-cultural bureaucratic empires.

Years ago Marc Bloch offered sober and wise advice on the pitfalls of comparative history that I fear this essay has followed more in spirit than in the letter. His formula for the most productive outcome of such studies was to limit the number of comparisons to two and to preserve simultaneity in time and proximity in space in order to guard against historical anachronisms and provide for mutual influence.⁷ My rationale for enlarging his categories on both the temporal and spatial levels is threefold. First, the evolution of the complex frontiers was a prolonged historical process that involved all the major Eurasian Empires in their common encounter with the nomadic world. Second, the frontier experience had a profound effect upon the internal structures of the empires and contributed importantly to their dissolution. Third, a spatial connection among all five was provided, indirectly if not directly, by the expansion of the Russian Empire which, notwithstanding different periods of time, engaged all the rest in a competition for territory and spheres of influence. To be sure, at present the comparative history of these complex frontier sections must be somewhat schematic, uneven and preliminary. But recent research has made it possible to proceed with greater assurance than a generation ago.

TRIPLEX CONFINIUM

To begin then with the Western Balkans. From the early sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century (1527–1797) three major powers, the Habsburg Monarchy, Venetian Republic and Ottoman Empire, engaged in a protracted

struggle for control of an area roughly marked by the Adriatic (but including coastal waters), the central range of the Dinaric mountain range and the tributary valleys of the Danube River basin. With the demise of Venice the military frontier between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires stabilized but at the cost of stimulating the development of Serbian nationalism on both sides of the boundary line. With the collapse of both empires in 1918, the new Yugoslav State faced the difficult and ultimately impossible task of incorporating this complex frontier into a new multi-cultural body politic.

First identified as the triple frontier or *Triplex Confinium* at the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, the region had already acquired over the previous century its main cultural features. For each of the three rival powers the frontier possessed a different strategic and symbolic significance. Since the sixteenth century it represented for the Habsburg Monarchy the cutting edge of its "Austrian mission" to defend Christendom against Islam. For the maritime Venetian Republic control over the Adriatic littoral was a matter of supreme commercial importance if not survival itself. For the Ottomans it was a critical sector in its holy war (*jihad*) both on land and on the sea as it fought for supremacy in the Adriatic-Mediterranean. The confrontation and interaction of three major religions, Latin Christianity, Orthodox Christianity and Islam complicated the relationships of the people of the borderlands, but did not provide the sole or even the major determinant of great power rivalry or conflict among the indigenous people.⁸

Along the frontier, each of the three powers concentrated its forces around strategic foreposts that acquired symbolic significance. For the Venetians Zadar became the center of their military power in the eastern Adriatic as well as the administrative center of the Venetian province of Dalmatia. For the Habsburgs Senj emerged as their most important maritime base blocking Ottoman access to the upper Adriatic. For the Ottomans Bihac served as both the capital of the sanjak of Bihac and the fortress anchoring their deepest penetration into the region. In addition the frontier was dotted with smaller fortresses that also changed hands frequently in the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Long after the warfare died down these fortress-towns retained their individual cultural characteristics from the earlier era.

Warfare on a large scale and periodic cross-border skirmishing and raiding had a devastating long-term effect on the ecology and demography as well as the religious and linguistic identities of the population of the *Triplex*. The periodic depopulation and destruction of inhabited places altered basic patterns of life. The Ottoman advance led to the conversion of the Bosnian Slavs, introducing a permanent Islamic presence into the region, and provoking an exodus of Croatian Christians from the frontier. The Turkish policy of scorched earth reversed centuries of population growth and expanded tillage. The Turks repopulated the deserted areas and mountain

passes with Slavic speaking Vlach herdsmen from the interior of the Balkan Peninsula who practiced transhumance. The Vlachs brought with them their Orthodox faith with fateful consequences for the future.⁹

The Habsburg and Venetian forces also contributed to the devastation and periodic depopulation of the region. During the Morean War (1684–1699) in particular the Venetians emulated the Turkish scorched earth policy, enslaving the captured Muslim population in order to deprive the Ottomans of people and livestock necessary for conducting a lengthy campaign. Summing up the impact of endemic warfare on the region, Drago Roksandic has written: “the way war was waged, which the later Middle Ages in South East Europe already knew as *akindzijski* or *martoloski* [mercenaries], where the main aim was to expel and murder, or to take captive the population and destroy their material culture and economic resources, existed in the triple-borderland area for two full centuries, and was mainly known as *mali rat* (‘small war’).”¹⁰

The three-way conflict gave rise to a peculiar form of frontier society where loyalties were unpredictable and border crossing a way of life. Although the Turks granted the Vlach herdsmen hereditary privileges, many of them later crossed over into the Venetian and Habsburg lands offering their services to the frontier defense forces. Their new hosts perceived them as sources of “barbarism” in the region. The Venetian Republic called them Morlacchi, considered them unreliable and undisciplined, even dangerous, although they continued to employ them as irregular troops against the Turks. The Vlachs served as auxiliary military forces on both the Ottoman and Habsburg sides at least into the eighteenth century when the Ottoman State gradually replaced them with regular troops.¹¹

An even more distinctive type of free military frontier community was the Uskuks of Senj. They were composed mainly of Vlach frontiersmen whose migration from Turkish into Habsburg lands began in the 1530s and reached a peak in a massive influx in the 1590s. The Habsburgs granted them privileges including de facto land ownership, exemption from taxes and self-government (but no monetary payment) in return for military service. This was the origin of the Habsburg Military Frontier that was to last until 1881.¹² For their livelihood the Uskuks often turned to raiding and plundering in coastal waters and across the porous land frontier with the Ottomans. They had their own code of conduct, and identified themselves as “the enemies of the enemies of Christ” according to their own lights. This is how they could justify plundering Christians on the Ottoman side of the frontier.¹³

Low level warfare not only created highly unstable and violent patterns of life but also encouraged opposite tendencies toward survival and accommodation. The entire region was “criss-crossed by numerous legal and illegal trade routes.” Smuggling, especially in salt, was widespread. Herders frequently ignored the military boundaries in moving their live-

stock from winter to summer quarters.¹⁴ Despite the Christian–Muslim basis of the clashes, there were instances of peaceful cultural intercourse ranging from blood brotherhood and inter-marriage to shared beliefs in honor, manliness and courage. Wendy Bracewell interprets the phenomenon as an embodying two referents: religious–political differences on the one hand and common cultural values on the other.¹⁵ Supported by additional research into later periods this insight might prove very valuable in explaining what so often confounds outside observers, namely the sudden outbreak of internecine fighting among peoples who have lived together peacefully for long periods in the Triplex Confinium.

In the strictest sense of the word the Triplex Confinium came to an end with the absorption in 1797 of the Venetian Republic into the Habsburg Monarchy. But by this time its main characteristics were deeply embedded in the social and cultural life of the region. Moreover, the Habsburg Monarchy continued to maintain and extend the Military Frontier manned by special frontier troops (*Grenzer*) who were drawn from the local German, Serb, Vlach and Szekler population and granted special privileges including religious toleration of Orthodoxy during periods of Catholic resurgence. What had once been the most undependable and undisciplined of frontier troops evolved by the mid-nineteenth century into the most reliable and loyal forces under imperial command.¹⁶ The reverse side of the Habsburg frontier policy was its unintended consequence of fostering Serbian nationalism.

The Habsburg advance into the Balkans peaked in 1719. With the liberation of Belgrade and the Banat the majority of Serbs were brought under the imperial flag. Although the Austrian occupation lasted only thirty years until the Turks drove them back north of the Sava, it was enough to kindle Serbian aspirations for unity. At the same time, the Turkish victories spurred large scale Serbian migration back into the Habsburg Empire. The flow continued throughout the eighteenth century. The prospect of an overwhelmingly preponderant Serbian population along the Ottoman frontier aroused concern among the Habsburg leadership. From the beginning of the eighteenth century they supported a large-scale colonization of the frontier by Germans from outside their own possessions with the specific aim of diluting and breaking up cohesive Serb communities. A Colonization Patent in 1763 and the creation of a Colonization Commission in 1766 consolidated a state system of privileges and financial support for colonists, not just Germans but also foreigners from Western Europe. Only Hungarians were excluded.¹⁷

Creating an ethnic mosaic along the frontier failed in the long run to deter the spread of Serbian nationalism in the empire with devastating consequences for the dynasty. It also left a legacy of intractable problems for Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian nationalists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ivo Banac has rightly warned against a simple equation of religion and national sentiment. But the different cultural foundations of Croat

and Serb nationalism, the one integrationist and the other assimilationist, were both unitarist.¹⁸ Their aspirations ran counter to the identities of substantial elements of the population on the frontier. Nowhere was the clash more sharply defined than in Bosnia following the uprising against the Turks in 1875 and reaching a climax in the 1890s.¹⁹ When in 1918 the Habsburg Monarchy collapsed the restraining power was removed. Large-scale outbreaks ravaged the region taking on a particularly violent communal character in Bosnia.²⁰ The establishment of a centralized Yugoslav state brought the disorders to an end. But the events merely added another burden to the historical memories. Whenever either state order broke down on the frontier, or wars resulted in drawing new boundaries as would be the case in 1940–45 and again in 1990 the peaceful patterns of cultural exchange would break down.

THE PONTIC STEPPE

For centuries after the devastating impact of the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century upon the Kievan principality, the grasslands north of the Black Sea remained sparsely populated and open to continuous and ruinous raids by nomads.²¹ From the east came the Nogai, Bashkirs, Kalmyks and from the south at the beginning of the fifteenth century the Crimean Tatars. Large areas of the legendary black earth region known as “the wild field” remained fallow while providing vast grazing zones for the herds and mounted warriors of the steppe. But beginning in the fourteenth century the Lithuanians and Poles from the west and in the fifteenth century the Muscovite State from the north and the Crimean Khanate from the south extended their territorial claims, advanced their military outposts and launched large scale plundering expeditions along the ill-defined frontier.²² At the same time enterprising hunters, gangs of fishermen, adventurers and freebooters penetrated the region that offered abundant natural riches of game, fish and wild products like honey but also promised freedom from superordinate authority of the Russian and Polish States, the burdens of taxes, life long military service or enserfment. The frontier took shape through both state policies and the spontaneous movement of peoples.

By the early fifteenth century three major powers were poised to compete for control of the region. For each of them there were clear strategic as well as economic and cultural advantages to be won. For the nobility (*szlachta*) of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth the region offered the attractions of highly productive agricultural land and direct trade connections between the Baltic and Black Seas as well as a territorial buffer against raids by the steppe nomads.²³ By the end of the sixteenth century, under the impulse of the Catholic hierarchy and especially the Jesuit Order, expansion into the region became part of the movement to convert schismatics (the Orthodox population) through the creation and promotion of the Uniat

Church. The Catholic–Orthodox religious struggle deeply divided the Ukrainian population and contributed in major ways to the lengthy history of political disunity in the region.²⁴

Similarly for the Russian State and its servitors there was the lure of rich agricultural land and the need for greater security against raids. They too perceived the trade advantages of bringing under their control the vast river system that linked the center (and at some future time a Baltic foothold) with the Black Sea. They were also concerned about the population flight from the center to the “wild field” beyond the reach of the government that threatened to sharply reduce the labor supply and tax paying capacity of the peasantry.²⁵

The acceptance by the Crimean Tatar Khanate of vassalage under the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth century was part of Constantinople’s imperial project to incorporate the Black Sea littoral into its economic system primarily as a source of food, raw materials and slaves.²⁶ The Crimean Tatars relied mainly on large scale raiding and the slave trade in order to maintain their semi-nomadic way of life. Their annual plundering expeditions of 30–40,000 horsemen into the Commonwealth, Muscovy and the north Caucasus yielded tens of thousands of prisoners who were then sold in Kaffa the largest slave market in Europe in the seventeenth century.²⁷

In strategic terms the region was defined by four navigable rivers, the Dniestr, Bug, Dniepr and Don, all flowing south into the Black Sea or Sea of Azov. The struggle over the rivers and their outlets centered on a series of forts extending from Khotin on the upper Dniestr to Azov near the mouth of the Don.²⁸ The great military obstacles to establishing firm control over the Pontic complex frontier were exacerbated by spatial and environmental factors. The river fortresses were much more widely distributed than those in the Triplex Confinium and separated by open steppe where conventional armies were forced to endure extremes of weather, absence of potable water, frequent drought and disease.

The great wars and endemic raiding long prevented permanent agricultural settlement of the Pontic steppe and preserved the natural conditions in which nomadic and semi-nomadic populations were able to survive and at times even threaten the stability of the great powers contending for domination over the region. Such was the case with the Zaporozhian and Don Cossacks, archetypical frontier peoples as well as the steppe nomads like the Nogai and Kalmyks. The Cossacks were a more formidable military force and a greater challenge to the great powers in the region than the Uskuks of Senj to whom they are sometimes compared or other Vlachs who played a similar but comparatively less autonomous role in the Triplex Confinium.

Throughout most of the fifteenth and sixteenth century the Cossacks fought off domination by the Russians, Poles and Tatars. They made and broke alliances with equal facility, fighting on one side then switching to

the other depending on circumstances and payment for their services. Their military resistance played a major role in fatally weakening the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. They immensely complicated the process of Muscovy's state building by participating in its civil wars and mounting large-scale rebellions that threatened to topple the throne. They heavily raided the Tatars, disrupted Ottoman trade on the Black Sea, stormed and held fortresses like Azov.²⁹

The Cossack insurrections reached a climax in the 1640s under the leadership of Bogdan Khmelnytskyi. Combining elements of peasants' revolt, religious war and struggle for Cossack autonomy it ultimately involved all three rival states in the region. Few events in this complex frontier region have given rise to such a passionate historiography.³⁰ Each of the three powers, the Cossacks and their peasant allies all nourished different visions for the future of the frontier and often disagreed among themselves. Of all the frontier figures emerging from these controversies none is more tragic than Adam Kysil. An Orthodox Ruthenian magnate, he sought a compromise solution that would preserve Cossack rights, guarantee the Polish magnates their property and serfs, preserve the dominance of the Orthodox faith and form an alliance with Muscovy against the Turks. His "patchwork solutions," in the words of his biographer, reveal the dilemma of men who sought to preserve their frontier culture in the press of powerful opposing forces that tore such regions apart.³¹

Eastern Europe's long Thirty Years War (1648–1681) over the Pontic frontier may be less well known than its west European counterpart but the outcome was just as decisive for power alignments in the region. Unlike the west, the war in the east destroyed the balance of power, although this was not immediately apparent. Nor was the fate of the frontier settled once and for all. The region was not only devastated and in place depopulated but also partitioned among the three rival powers. The remaining population of Cossacks and peasants fell short of achieving their cherished goals. Muscovy appeared to have been the major winner. By signing the Treaty of Pereiaslavl in 1654 with the Cossacks, the Treaty of Andrusovo in 1667 with the Poles and in 1681 a twenty-year peace with the Turks it acquired sovereignty over the left bank Ukraine and Kiev. Precisely what was meant by sovereignty was open to dispute that gave rise to at best count eleven different interpretations of the clauses of Pereiaslavl.³² Belatedly and unsuccessfully, the Poles offered a counter proposal in 1659 at Hadiach that would have created a triune state of Poland-Lithuania-Ukraine while the Turks in 1665 offered Hetman Doroshenko "protection and defense" and promised to assist him in becoming Hetman of "both sides of the Dniepr."³³

Adept at fighting and diplomatic maneuvering, the Cossacks failed, nonetheless, to convert the frontier into a unified state. Their egalitarianism had been steadily undermined by the growth of property relations, es-

pecially among the more privileged Cossacks registered by the Commonwealth. Class differences gave rise to bitterness among their less favored brethren and hostility among the peasantry. Their autonomy was whittled away under pressure from Moscow and their room for maneuver weakened by the decline of the Commonwealth and retreat of the Turks.³⁴ The end came when the Russians eliminated their Polish rivals in the First Partition in 1772, then the Turks in a long war culminating in the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardzhi in 1774. The following year Catherine the Great ordered the abolition of the Zaporozhian Hetmanate. A handful of survivors made their way to the Danube and enrolled in the Habsburg frontier forces.

The “closing of the frontier” in the Pontic steppe inaugurated a new phase in its history marked by two contradictory processes. Colonization and resettlement helped the Russians stabilize the region.³⁵ But a mythology of Cossack independence gradually emerged to help shape Ukrainian nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries and ultimately undermine the hegemonic power of the north. Russian imperial colonization emulated Habsburg policies and brought into the Pontic frontier some of the same settlers as in *Triplex Confinium*, primarily Germans and Serbs, but also Greeks and Bulgarians from the Ottoman Empire and even “settlers under Muslim law” like Tatars and Nogai.³⁶ Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in 1783 reversed the population flow when most of the Crimean Tatars, perhaps as many as two thirds, emigrated to the Ottoman Empire despite Russian efforts to keep them by offering religious toleration and other concessions to the elite.³⁷ It was a tragic irony of Russian history that the empire perceived foreign colonists and formerly turbulent Cossacks as an important economic resource and strategic bulwark on a contested frontier while a century and a half later they were regarded in exactly the opposite way. To Stalin they constituted a security problem that could only be solved by mass deportation.

The mythology of Cossack independence and resistance to external rule featured two lines of development. First, beginning in the 1840s Ukrainian gentry and intellectuals propagated an idealized vision of Cossack life as a democratic counterpart to Polish oligarchy and Muscovite autocracy. Second, about the same time the greatest Ukrainian poet, Taras Shevchenko popularized the idea that the rebels against Polish rule in the 18th century, the so-called *haidamak* movement, was a struggle against national and social oppression and not—as Polish historiography had portrayed it—a bandit led mob of disobedient peasants.³⁸ In all three cases the search for “national heroes” or “traitors” promoted a frontier mythology that transformed the complex social and cultural conflicts in the Pontic steppe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into chapters of different national narratives. These in turn fed new myths of Russia’s unlimited expansion and the clash of civilizations.

THE CAUCASIAN ISTHMUS

The third section of the complex frontiers of Eurasia, the Caucasian Isthmus, was a double frontier with respect to both imperial rivals and the indigenous populations. North of the Caucasus Mountains the Russian–Ottoman competition, with the Iranians only indirectly involved, encountered fierce and prolonged resistance from the tribes of Adyge, Kabarda, Chechnia and Daghestan. In constructing their Caucasian Military Line Moscow was also obliged to deal with the free Cossacks who had as early as the sixteenth century settled along the Kuban and Terek River valleys. Mainly Slavic in origin they favored a mixed economy, agriculture, cattle raising and fishing. They were occasionally enrolled in Moscow's frontier service but they often lapsed into raiding indiscriminately the mountain tribes, Russian merchants, Ottoman and Iranian commercial and diplomatic missions. Their way of life and ecological niche resembled in many ways the Uskuks of Senj as well as their Zaporozhian brethren. They intermarried with local women and even welcomed recruits from the mountaineers. The institution of *kunak-kunchestvo* (brotherhood) enabled the Cossacks and mountaineers to perform similar services for one another as mediators, bounty-hunters, traders and escorts. The Cossacks shared with the mountain people a warrior culture that featured displays of horsemanship, shooting, extravagant dress and a sense of honor. When in the first half of the 19th century the Russian government brought pressure on the Terek Cossacks to campaign regularly against the mountaineers their loyalties were sorely tested; desertion became a serious problem. The mountain leaders, particularly Shamil in the 1840s, rewarded Cossacks deserters, especially if they converted to Islam, with important positions in his military units. The Russian authorities learned the hard way to distrust both their own Cossacks and auxiliary units recruited from mountaineers under their nominal suzerainty.³⁹

Both the Cossacks and mountain people resisted easy assimilation into the military and administrative system of the competing empires. Like other free agents along complex frontiers they casually took oaths of loyalty and submission only to renounce them when a better opportunity arose. Moreover, Moscow found it difficult to co-opt the elite of the mountain peoples because of the fragmented character of political authority among the clans.⁴⁰ The nomadic culture survived in the seasonal movement of herds, which ignored linear boundary lines and static administrative structures. As for the Cossacks, they not only raided and plundered Russian caravans and merchants, but participated in the major Cossack revolts of the seventeenth century. Up to 1720 they resisted formal subordination to Russian authority (the governor of Astrakhan) but long after that date their lands were a refuge for fugitives, the most famous of whom was Emelian Pugachev. They were only officially enrolled as Cossacks in 1824 when they had to assume service obligations and pay taxes.

The Russian government was inconsistent on two levels in its policies toward strengthening and consolidating the Caucasian Military Line. First, it oscillated between promoting and discouraging settlement of peasants and dissident religious groups in the region.⁴¹ Second, it alternated between policies of tolerance and repression in its treatment of the customs and religious beliefs of the mountain people.⁴² Russia's great advantage in securing and advancing its military frontier in the North Caucasus, as in the Ukrainian steppe to the northwest and the Kazakh steppe to the northeast, was the settlement and protection of an agricultural population that engaged in a mixed economy and was able, by the early nineteenth century, to produce a surplus of grain. Before that the Cossacks were obliged to rely on trade with the mountain people who supplied them with agricultural products. The interdependence of the Cossacks and mountain people produced a stable frontier exchange economy that for several centuries kept the political situation in balance. It was only when in the 1840s and 50s a sufficient number of state peasants had been settled in the North Caucasus that the region was able to provision the forts and Cossack stations as well as the resident armed forces. This made it possible within the next two decades to subdue the mountaineers and bring to an end the Caucasian Military Line.⁴³

Within the rugged environment a real culture clashes, not only or even primarily religions fuelled a resistance to Russian authority that was more intense and prolonged than any other in the empire and its successors. There were numerous uprisings following the initial bloody suppression of the Murid revolt in the 1860s. Under Russian and early Soviet rule the mountaineers retained their traditional customs, semi-nomadic way of life and their weapons. However, whenever central state authority either showed signs of weakness as in 1918–20 and 1941–42 or else threatened their frontier culture as in 1936–38, the mountaineers were quick to resort to arms.⁴⁴ Yet the resistance also gave rise to an ambiguous representation of the struggle on the Russian side that became embedded in the literary tradition. On the one hand the Russians perceived themselves as the bearers of civilization; on the other hand they celebrated the primitive nobility and heroism of the mountaineers.⁴⁵ The ambiguity lives on into the twenty-first century as the struggle continues.

The South Caucasus (formerly called Transcaucasus) had a long history as a frontier first between the Roman-Byzantine and Persian Empires and then between the early Christian kingdoms and the Islamic States. Even earlier the region had been repeatedly invaded by steppe nomads to the north, Scythians and Sarmatians. As a result of invasion, migration and flight, it displayed all the characteristics of a complex frontier with its heterogeneous population, contested identities and rapidly shifting internal borders.⁴⁶ Like the western Balkans, with which it shares a similar geo-cultural profile, the mountains isolated different cultural groups, provided nat-

ural defenses for the defeated but unvanquished and proved difficult to subjugate. The flanking, inland seas, the Black and Caspian, provided important trading outlets. But in contrast to the Adriatic, the absence of many good harbors and sheltering islands and the highly unpredictable weather conditions limited their influence on internal developments.⁴⁷ But the coastal plains, especially along the western shores of the Caspian provided easy access to invaders. By the fifteenth century the independent Caucasian principalities, kingdoms and khanates had been severely weakened by feudal wars and eight successive incursions of nomadic Mongols over the previous two centuries.⁴⁸ In the mid-sixteenth century they were overwhelmed by the Ottoman and Iranian attacks from the west and east. At the same time the Russians made their initial though not very successful appearance in the region. Baku occupied a key strategic position in these struggles. An ancient site dating back to Sasanian times it was another of those frontier towns that became the focal point of successive invasions. From Arab control it passed into the hands of the Shirvanskii khan; during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries the Persians occupied it until the local khan swore allegiance to the Russians in 1796 only to renege and finally surrender the city to them a decade later. Like in Batumi and Tiflis waves of invasions and migration left a highly mixed ethnic legacy.⁴⁹

To the south of Baku the Arak and Kura River valleys had once been densely populated, as the remains of irrigation systems testify. In the eighteenth century the surrounding fertile steppe had reverted to grazing lands for nomads who migrated every winter from Persia until in the late nineteenth century when they were forbidden to cross the frontier because of their clashes with Cossacks.⁵⁰ By this time a different migratory pattern had developed across the frontier. Tens of thousands of Iranian unskilled workers were seasonally employed in the oil fields. They provided a conduit between Caucasian social democratic revolutionaries and the Iranian urban workers who played an important role in the Persian revolution of 1910.⁵¹

There were roughly three phases in the Ottoman–Persian–Russian struggle: from the middle decades to the end of the sixteenth century when Russia was forced temporarily to withdraw from the competition; from the early sixteenth to the early seventeenth century when the Ottomans and Iranians partitioned the region after several long and costly wars; from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth century when Russia returned in force and Iran was virtually eliminated from the competition, while retaining part of Azerbaizhan. Then the Ottomans retreated in the face of superior Russian power losing most of Armenia in 1878 only to recover it following the Russian revolution. The long frontier wars, often accompanied by inter-ethnic fighting, periodically devastated and depopulated the South Caucasus frontier including both the small Christian principalities and kingdoms, and the Muslim khanates. One result was to retard the emergence of national independence movements until the early twentieth century.

Ottoman plans to occupy the Caucasian isthmus in order to exercise control over the Black and Caspian Seas were motivated by commercial and religious interests. They aimed to dominate the overland trade and the annual pilgrimages from Central Asia and to establish contact with their Sunni Muslim brethren among the Uzbeks on the northeastern flank of their Shiite rivals in Iran. The Russian conquest of Astrakhan in 1557 and the Iranian bid for power in the rich province of Azerbaizhan threatened to block them. Ottoman expansion in the South Caucasus reached its apogee in 1590 when after a thirteen-year war they drove the Iranians out of the region and reached the Caspian.⁵² But it was a Pyrrhic victory. Their communication lines were stretched over the wild terrain of the Caucasus. They faced the same kind of guerilla warfare and raiding by local mountaineers that subsequently plagued the Russian advance and conquest in the 19th and 20th centuries. Moreover, the Iranians were about to undergo one of their periodic revivals under their greatest Safavid king, Shah Abbas (1588–1629). The long wars of the seventeenth century over the South Caucasus led to the near extinction of the Georgians. Like other peoples of the complex frontiers they sought to survive by aligning themselves with first one then another of the competing powers. In west Georgia much of the reduced population was Islamicized. In the east many of the local leaders and their auxiliaries entered Iranian service and became renown as fearsome warriors.⁵³ At the same time the Armenian population was also greatly reduced. During the early seventeenth century a large-scale emigration inaugurated the Armenian Diaspora.⁵⁴

The founders of the new, Safavid dynasty were Turkic tribes from the Iranian frontier province of Azerbaizhan in the south Caucasus. Still in touch with their nomadic heritage they retained their faith in the radical and chiliastic sects connected to the Shiite branch of Islam. Foremost among these were Turkic tribes from Azerbaizhan dubbed *qizilbashi* (red turbans) after the twelve red stripes on their caps in honor of the twelve imams of the Shiites. Under the leadership of the Safavid clan they formed a virtual independent state in the southeast of the province from which they launched attacks aimed at unifying Azerbaizhan and then all of Iran.⁵⁵ They regarded Azerbaizhan as the ideal Turkic State where syncretic religious practices prevailed, blending pre-Islamic local beliefs with shamanist beliefs from the steppe under a thin veneer of Shiite Islam. The outcome was similar to that of another frontier people, the Manchus, in the conquest of China a century and a half later. Like the Manchus the *qizilbashi* were never completely absorbed into the social and political structures of the lands they conquered. The difference was that the *qizilbashi* remained a volatile frontier element within the Iranian State. Their religious fervor provoked revolts among Anatolian peasants along another old frontier line that went back to the Roman-Sasanian period, enraged the Sunni administration in Constantinople and led to clashes that spilled over into the South Cauca-

sus.⁵⁶ Iranian Azerbaizhan also unlike Manchuria preserved its rebellious traditions, which revived during periodic weakness of the central authority and lasted well into the twentieth century erupting after both world wars.⁵⁷

In the third period the return of Russia to the South Caucasus under Peter I "the Great" took over a century to incorporate all of Georgia but only part of Armenia and Azerbaizhan into the empire. The process involved many disappointments and betrayals of the local Christian population and widespread hostility among elements of the Muslim population leading to mass emigration. Russian policy was generally opportunistic and protection of the Christians was not allowed to interfere with imperial state interests.⁵⁸ The final delimitation of the contested frontiers with Iran (Treaty of Turkmanchai, 1828) and the Ottomans (Berlin, 1878) did not end the unstable conditions in the region but only signaled a new phase of internal resistance.⁵⁹

By the late 19th century efforts by the Russian government to pacify and assimilate the South Caucasus ran into growing opposition from indigenous intelligentsia and a burgeoning working class forming revolutionary parties under the banner of nationalism and socialism. During the revolution of 1905 the entire complex frontier was engulfed in violence directed against the Russian authorities and local elite, or flaring up among ethnic groups, particularly Armenians and Azeri.⁶⁰ Even after the collapse of the Russian and Ottoman Empires the short-lived independent republics of Georgia and Azerbaizhan succumbed to a familiar pattern of external invasion by Turkish and Russian armies and internal quarrels over how to draw boundaries through the territory of mixed ethnic-religious groups.

INNER ASIA

The complex frontiers of Inner Asia have long been the meeting place of Chinese, Mongol and Manchu or Jurchen cultures with the Russians and the Japanese as latecomers in the rivalry for hegemony. From the very earliest period of Chinese history the river civilization to the south of the Yellow River with its intensive agriculture organized in cellular villages was separated from the arid and semi-arid steppe to the north where nomadic cultures predominated. But despite what Owen Lattimore called the "margin of cultivation" there was no clear-cut boundary line separating the two cultures as he himself was the first to make clear.⁶¹ Both shared a need for one another's products: the Chinese for horses and the nomads for manufactured goods. Ancient patterns of trade gave rise to an elaborate institutionalization of exchange including tribute and gift-giving and even intermarriage. When for various reasons trade was threatened or interrupted, often on the initiative of the Chinese, the nomads would resort to raiding and plundering in order to obtain what they required to survive.⁶²

If there was no sharp cultural or geographical division, neither was

there a clear-cut historical precedent for drawing boundaries to the north. For four centuries from the end of the Tang dynasty until the Mongol conquest, China was shielded from the incursions of the steppe nomads by several semi-nomadic states that occupied the region north of the Yellow River. Following the Mongol conquest the Yuan dynasty made another unsuccessful effort to fuse the Chinese and steppe cultures. In the well-known pattern the Mongols consolidated their power, adopted the culture and imperial structure of the vanquished, but then forfeited the loyalty of the tribal leaders without winning over the Chinese population. In the words of F. W. Mote: "They failed in the steppe pattern of failure."⁶³ After they were overthrown by a domestic rebellion, the region north of the Yellow River became a complex frontier region where the new, purely Chinese Ming dynasty, the Mongols and Jurchen (later Manchu) peoples competed for supremacy. Unlike the struggles in other complex frontiers, however, ethnic and religious hostility played no role here in part because the Confucian ethical system had no place for either prejudice.⁶⁴

The key strategic points around which these struggles centered were the oases of the Tarim Basin (in Xinjiang) the Ordos Oasis (in Inner Mongolia) and the Liao River Valley (in Manchuria). For the nomads they represented necessary forward positions supplying water and fodder for their mounted cavalry raiding or invading the northwest or northern provinces of China. For the Chinese they were the anchors of their outer defense lines that could also serve if required as bases to launch punitive expeditions into the steppe. So, for example, the strength and vigor of the early Ming dynasty during the late 14th and early 15th centuries rested upon a vigorous defense of both the Ordos Oasis and Liao Valley. When they abandoned the Ordos to the Mongols the Ming *de facto* renounced their forward policy of dominating the steppe margin in exchange for a purely defensive strategy based on building walls.⁶⁵ It was the first step in their long decline culminating in the Manchu invasion. When the Manchus launched their conquest of China in the 1640s they first took possession of the Liao Valley, then added the Ordos and in the 18th century established control over the Tarim Basin capping the greatest expansion of the Chinese Empire in centuries.⁶⁶

A frontier people who came to rule a great empire like the Ottomans, the Safavids and Qajars in Iran, the Manchus adopted two unique strategies in order to reduce the chances of being overthrown in turn by another steppe invasion. For at least a century they preserved their homeland in the northeast against cultural and economic assimilation by the Han people in order to keep alive their warrior tradition.⁶⁷ At the same time that they resisted sinicization they promoted the idea of a multicultural empire embracing all the diverse peoples on their frontiers including, most importantly, the Mongols.⁶⁸ This formidable cultural synthesis gave them the decisive advantage in their long frontier struggle against the Mongols who constituted the main threat to the security of their newly won empire.

In Mongolia, which became in the words of Owen Lattimore "China's frontier province par excellence," the Qing government conducted a dual policy of dividing the people along both class and tribal lines while allowing considerable latitude to the more independent tribes in the region. Mongol political unity had not existed since the heyday of the great steppe empires of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although there had been periodic attempts to restore it. But in the 1630s and 40s when the Manchus were forcing the northern frontiers of China, a constellation of West Mongol tribes (Oirat in Russian or Olot in Chinese) succeeded in controlling all the northern part of Eastern Turkestan (Dzhungaria). At first they denied any intention of restoring the empire of Chinggis Khan. They accepted the decision of the great Mongol congress (*chulgan*) of 1640 to uphold the confederation of tribes, adopt a Mongol code of laws and avoid internecine warfare in order to present a common front against external enemies. Dzhungaria gradually became a center of attraction for all Mongols as its enlightened leaders constructed monasteries and towns, promoted agriculture and trades. Then in the 1650s and 60s as so often had happened in the past, a series of succession struggles and tribal rivalries plunged the country into civil war. The emergence from the strife of a strong leader, the famous Galdan, precipitated an expansionist policy aimed at subjugating the Mongols of Eastern Turkestan and north Mongolia (the Khalka tribes). This brought in the Chinese.⁶⁹

As early as the 1640s the Manchus had brought Inner Mongolia under their control and in the 1670s took advantage of tribal wars in order to take the Northern Mongols (Khalkas) under their protection. Confronted by a determined effort by the Oirats to expand their Dzhungarian khanate into a pan Mongol Empire, the Qing sent powerful armies to the northwest where they finally defeated their rivals after fifty years of intermittent fighting. These wars revealed all the complexities of a struggle for the Inner Asian complex frontiers. The Khalkas shifted back and forth between the Chinese and Oirats, at one point seeking help from the Russians. They claimed that their oaths of allegiance, acceptance of titles and seals from the Chinese did not constitute vassalage but only an alliance while the Chinese claimed the opposite.⁷⁰ Combining military threats and trade as a political weapon, the Qing finally succeeded in the 1690s in forcing them to recognize Chinese sovereignty.⁷¹ In the meantime their efforts to incorporate the Khalkas and their long struggle with Dzhungaria which lasted until the mid-eighteenth century was complicated by the appearance of the Russians on the scene.

The rivalry between Qing China and the Russian Empire over their long complex frontier lasted until the mid-nineteenth century. Its resolution was purchased at the expense of the unity of the Mongols. In its first phase, ending in the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, superior Chinese military forces forced the Russians to accept an unfavorable territorial settlement.

Accordingly, the Mongol tribes split their allegiance. The Khalkas under pressure from the Oirats accepted incorporation into China.⁷² The remaining north and east Mongol tribes submitted to Russian control. The mixed economy of the Mongols, akin to the Siberian Cossacks, may have helped in the process of assimilation.⁷³ When the Qing turned their full force against Dzhungaria, the Oirats turned to Russia for assistance. But the Chinese warned the Russians that any support would be considered a violation of their "peaceful agreement."⁷⁴

In the second phase of the Chinese–Russian struggle the Qing Empire reached its deepest penetration of central Eurasia. The prelude to the Chinese drive to the west was their victory over the Dzhungarian khanate in the wars of the 1690s. As a result the Oirats moved north and west bringing Uighurs and Kirghiz under their control. The last of the Mongol Empires, the Oirat Empire of Dzhungaria, stretched from the lower Irtysh in the north to the borders of Tibet in the south and from Tashkent which it occupied in 1723 to Western Turkestan. Although its political structure was like that of the Golden Horde, Dzhungaria was not merely a nomadic confederation. It had some of the earmarks of an early modern state with a mix of pastoral and agricultural communities based on a restored irrigation system, a few urban centers where handicrafts and, thanks to runaway Russians, the manufacture of guns, cannon and powder had taken root. Fearful of a Mongol State on its frontier, the Qing Empire was forced once again to come to terms with the Russians who also had a large stake in the outcome of the struggle. The Oirats renewed their requests for support from Peter the Great, but the Russians were simultaneously receiving appeals from the Kazakh nomads who complained about the infringement of the Oirats on their pasturelands. In the negotiations with the Russian leading to the Treaty of Kiakhta in 1727, the Chinese initially demanded huge territorial concessions in Eastern and Western Siberia. In the words of the chief Russian negotiator, they were "intent on stripping away by treaty or by arms all the Mongolian lands from the Russian Empire."⁷⁵ Overmatched the Russians once again ceded substantial territories to the Chinese including some of their own settlements.

With the Russians neutralized, the Chinese mounted a series of powerful offensives in 1755–58 that destroyed the Dzhungarian khanate and scattered the Oirats throughout central Eurasia. The Qing armies campaigned deep into the mountainous Altai region, into Kazakhstan and occupied all of Eastern Turkestan (including the Tarim Basin). By the end of the century the Qing was encouraging immigration of the Han population and the conversion of pastureland into settled colonies.⁷⁶

The incorporation of Eastern Turkestan was only the beginning of Qing problems in this turbulent frontier. The new province of Xinjiang quickly acquired a reputation as the most rebellious in China. In Dzhungaria the main caravan route along the so-called northern road of the Tarim Basin,

passing through the oases of Turfan and Aksu to Kashgar was the main line of communications that ran the entire length of the region superseding the ancient Silk route and "for centuries the strategic key to Chinese imperial policy among the Turkestan oases as a whole..." Its strategic importance was further enhanced by the fact that to the west the trade routes passed through the Chinese Muslim provinces of Ningsia and Kansu where in the nineteenth century endemic rebellion threatened to cut off the whole of Eastern Turkestan from the Chinese core regions. Moreover, to the west the valley opened up toward the Kazakh steppe where by the mid-eighteenth century the Russians were advancing to challenge Chinese hegemony throughout the region.⁷⁷ Exposed to the steppe it suffered periodic invasion, devastation and forced migration. As a result the land though rich was undeveloped and an amalgam of ethnic groups. The key to its wealth and strategic center was the Ili Valley populated by Mongols, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Manchus and Chinese where the great rebellion of 1864–65 brought a Russian occupation in its train.

Before the Qing conquest Eastern Turkestan had enjoyed a more stable history. The rich oases and great trade routes to Central Asia and India were screened from the steppe by mountains. True to their multicultural policies, the Qing gave a good deal of autonomy to the local mixed Turkic, Muslim population. But it also extended special protection to the Chinese traders. A small irritation grew under subsequent lax and corrupt colonial administrators. Discontent flamed into rebellion under the leadership of the Khojas, a religious-political clan that had been deposed by the Qing but continued to control the oases of the western Turkestan khanates across the frontier. The combination of Khoja invasions and local Muslim revolts repeatedly shook the region in 1760, 1765, 1815, 1830–31, several times in 1847, again in 1857 culminating in the great rebellion of 1864–65 that enveloped the entire province.⁷⁸

The Ili rebellion revealed all the problems of establishing firm control over a complex frontier. The decline of the imperial Qing administration at the center had sparked internal rebellions that spread to the periphery where ethnic and religious differences between the frontier peoples and the ruling elite exacerbated the conflict. A rival empire, Russia, was drawn in when the Chinese lost control of the province to the insurgents under a leader, Ya'qub Beg, who sought diplomatic and military support from Great Britain. The frontier with Russia was overrun by refugees, raiding increased and trade collapsed. In response Russian forces occupied the Ili Valley remaining there for ten years. In typically frontier fashion Ya'qub Beg tried to play the Russians against the British while keeping the Chinese at bay. But he could not keep his turbulent nomad allies under control. Chinese armies dispatched from the center finally defeated him. The Russians evacuated Ili in 1881 only after coming dangerously close to war with China over ter-

ritorial boundaries. In the meantime, Russia had occupied the oases of western Turkestan and destroyed the power of the Khojas. China responded by abolishing local rule in eastern Turkestan and incorporating the region as the "new dominion" (Xinjiang) into the administrative structure of China proper.⁷⁹ The partition of Turkestan, like the other complex frontiers, divided its peoples leaving Uighurs, Kazakh and Kirghiz on both sides and creating the potential for further conflict in the twentieth century.

From the mid-eighteenth century Beijing adopted new assimilationist policies all along the northern marches of the empire. Sinicization of Manchuria followed an erratic course until the eighteen-eighties when Chinese soldiers were first introduced and the old tribal areas were thrown open to Chinese colonization (1907). Even earlier, by 1800, almost the entire population of the northeast spoke Chinese except for the Mongols to the west and the Tungus speaking population on the Amur frontier.⁸⁰

In Inner Mongolia assimilation and colonization by the Han peoples went forward more rapidly and extensively. The Mongol nobility was incorporated into the Qing aristocracy, and the people continued to pay taxes to the Mongol princes. The Chinese government promoted two Buddhist religious centers in Inner and Outer Mongolia, the growth of monasteries, and the spread of Chinese trade. The unholy triune alliance among banner princes, monasteries and Han merchants undermined the traditional semi-nomadic society and culture and impoverished the population.⁸¹ By the early 20th century bitterness had spread among the population. Even the more progressive dissident princes preferred to throw their support behind Chinese reformers, like Dr. Sun Yat-sen who promised autonomy for the non-Han peoples, rather than to join forces with their northern brethren in a campaign to create a greater Mongolia. Later, when disillusioned by the Kuomintang policies in the nineteen twenties and thirties, they turned to Japan, a new competitor in the struggle over the region.

What became known as Outer Mongolia enjoyed a much greater degree of autonomy than Inner Mongolia, which had been conquered much earlier. No doubt this had something to do with the proximity of the Russian Empire and the presence of Buryat Mongols across the frontier. As a result, the tribes of Outer Mongolia preserved a greater distance from the Mongol court and at the same time they were shielded from the advance of Chinese agricultural settlements. The North Mongols were, of all the steppe peoples, the most successful in exploiting their location in the intermediate space between the Russian and Chinese Empires in order to convert their precarious form of autonomy into a shadow state. During the confusion of the Chinese revolution of 1911 the Russians supported the Mongols' declaration of independence. Yet even with Russian and later Soviet support they had to wait more than three decades before China fully relinquished its claims and recognized, in 1945, Outer Mongolia's full independence.⁸²

CONCLUSION

To return to the aims of this essay, the concept of complex frontiers offers an alternative to the theory of the clash of civilizations and theories of unlimited expansion. Empires not civilizations are the agents of cultural and political interaction. Imperial competition and conflict on the one hand and the migration, deportation and colonization of people on the other hand contributed to creating broad bands of territory on the frontiers of the Eurasian empires inhabited by highly variegated ethnic and religious groups. Their interaction with one another and their reaction to imperial conquest oscillated between cultural and commercial exchange and various forms of violence ranging from raids to low level warfare and rebellion. Imperial attitudes and policies toward these populations were also ambiguous or contradictory. They alternated between toleration and political concessions to forced assimilation and repression.

Empires differ most strikingly from nation states in their way of imagining and fixing their boundaries. The contrast stems from diverse conceptions of universalism and power. Imperial ideologies are inspired by the ideal of universal domination but accept limitations imposed by their own cultural traditions and the constraints of power politics. The first of these limiting factors arises from a self-generated definition of what constitutes a universe. In the case of the Eurasian empires the basis was religious or ethical often if not always related to a foundation myth. A messianic element is almost always present in one of two forms; it is either inner or outer directed. Moreover, the orientation may shift over time from one to the other. Illustrative examples of inner directed messianism include the concept of the Third Rome invented in Medieval Moscow on the cusp of imperial expansion and the much earlier but more persistent Chinese concept of the Middle Kingdom. The Ottoman and Iranian (Safavid) Empires in their early stages embraced an outer directed messianism that then receded and turned in upon itself in the nineteenth century. The Habsburgs followed a different trajectory. Their "Austrian mission" shifted back and forth from a defender of Christendom to a liberator of Christians depending on its military strength and its rivalry with the Ottoman and Russian Empires in the old *Triplex Confinium*.

The ideology of a nation state by contrast may not be innocent of universalist rhetoric beginning with the images of "the city on the hill" of the young American republic and the tripartite formula of the French Revolution. At times these types of inner-directed messianism shifted their orientation. In the case of the French this phase was brief if violent during the twenty years after the revolution. The United States has been more inconsistent and ambiguous, oscillating between inner and outer directed forms. It may also be argued that many of the successor states of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires embraced variations of the inner directed type of

messianism that took the form of the "Greater nation complex." Historians have also described this form as "integral nationalism." But in general the nation state expressed its universalism in terms of a model to be emulated rather than an impulse to expand.

A second limitation of imperial universalism was pragmatic. The actual physical boundaries established by territorial expansion were determined by a combination of internal and external factors. Much depended upon the empire's ability to mobilize material resources, keep abreast of military technology and inspire its elites and armies with the messianic message. Then there was the need to overcome the countervailing power of its imperial rivals competing for the same territories, a process marked more often by compromise and partition rather than complete victory by one or another empire. Finally, frontier maintenance and stability could not be guaranteed even after the absorption or incorporation of new territories into the empires due to resistance of the indigenous population that ranged from "weapons of the weak" in everyday life to armed rebellion.⁸³

For the nation state the setting of boundaries along pragmatic lines took a different turn. In general emerging nation states throughout the world followed the example of revolutionary France (the Jacobin model). The national ideal as proclaimed by Danton combined geographical and ethno-linguistic criteria in order to secure both "natural" and "national" frontiers. The instrumentality of drawing boundaries was identical to that of nation-state formation—self-determination. To be sure, these lines of demarcation were often more symbolic than real, more approximate than self-evident, less determined by free choice than by military solutions. Here too as with the imperial boundaries the limits were often set by the resistance of external forces. Certain regions like Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig, Alto-Adige, Transylvania were heavily contested by rival nation states basing their claims on alternative versions of natural and national criteria. Moreover, there has never been a set of internationally accepted norms for what constituted a natural frontier.⁸⁴ In sum, there are no absolute differences in the way in which imperial and nation-state boundaries have been drawn. Yet, is still possible and necessary for the purposes of this essay to argue that there are important relative differences.

If imperial boundaries have no intrinsic limitations and are solely established by force, then they are bound to be heavily and persistently contested. The universal claims of empires, whatever the practical constraints may be in carrying them out, cannot by their very nature be accepted as legitimate by either the people they conquer or their rivals for the contested space. There can be no community of empires as there is a community of nation states. All empires share a similar problem of legitimizing boundaries. As perceived through the prism of the community of nations imperial frontiers appear problematic because they are sustained by force, even though they might have been recognized from time to time by solemn

treaties. That is the reason the moving, military character of these frontiers constituted one of the most important defining features of the Eurasian Empires since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The successor states inherited the social reality of the complex frontiers. Whether they emerged as new nation states (fragments of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires) or as reconstituted multicultural states (Iran, the Soviet Union and China) their frontiers shared the same characteristics as their imperial predecessors. Given the complex population mix of the frontier regions, it was impossible to draw new borders after 1918 that followed strictly or in many cases even approximately ethno-linguistic lines. Yet the new legitimacy rested upon national self-determination, a principle that was clearly violated by the ethnic and religious composition of those frontiers. (In the case of the Soviet Union the new frontiers violated the principle of international revolution based as they were upon a purely territorial compromise with the external "capitalist" world.) The successor states also inherited a dual legacy of conflicting historical memories. One set recalled endemic reciprocal violence imposed by and directed against the external oppressor and the proximate Other. Another set favored peaceful coexistence, inter-marriage, cultural borrowing and trade. It was possible for leaders of the new states to evoke either set depending upon their political goals. If they sought to follow the tradition of earlier nation states, in particular the French, Jacobin model, then they sought by whatever means possible to swamp the frontier peoples through internal colonization or to assimilate them. The alternative was to appeal to the more tolerant multicultural tradition. In fact, varieties of both tactics were tried in much the same irregular and often contradictory ways that the imperial elite employed in seeking to resolve the same problem: how to guarantee security and stability in the complex frontiers that have remained for many centuries the major obstacle to both these cherished goals of the states of Eurasia.

NOTES

- 1 Myths of unlimited expansion run through a large literature on Russian and Islamic history. The powerful but much disputed view of S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996) has generated a great deal of criticism. See, for example, a reprint of his original article in *Foreign Affairs*, the rebuttal by his critics and his response in S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 2 I do not accept the Eurasianism of émigré Russian and post-Soviet Russian scholars. For reliable, critical reviews of those concepts see N. V. Riasanovsky, "The Emergence of Eurasianism," *California Slavic Studies* 4 (1967); I. Vinkovetsky, "Classical Eurasianism and Its Legacy," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 34:2 (Summer 2000): 125–40.

- 3 While acknowledging the value of the "contextual approach" to empire and to frontiers, it is necessary to add that it has been applied most fruitfully to overseas empires where self-styled "European" travelers and geographers orientalized the Other. It is less clear how informative such an approach might be when applied to "oriental" societies which adopted other methods of defining the Other. Cf. E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) for the classic statement but also his *Culture and Empire*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). See also A. Godlewska, N. Smith, *Geography and Empire* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1994) and a special issue of *History Workshop Journal* 39 (Spring 1995) especially the editorials "Change and Continuity" and "Rethinking the Idea of Place," iii–vii. For applications of the contextual approach to Russia see M. Bassin, "Solov'ev and the 'Frontier Hypothesis': The Nationalist Significance of Open Space," *Journal of Modern History* 3 (1993): 473–511 and idem, *Imperial Visions. Nationalist Imagination and Geographic Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840–1865* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 4 A. J. Rieber, "The Frontier in History," *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 9 (Amsterdam, New York: Elsevier, 2001), 5812–5817.
- 5 By the time of the second siege of Vienna in 1683 that transformation had been completed.
- 6 See for example N. Breyfogle, A. Schrader, W. Sunderland, *Peopling the Russian Frontier* (Northern Illinois, forthcoming).
- 7 M. Bloch, "A Contribution Towards a Comparative History of European Societies," in M. Bloch, *Land and work in mediaeval Europe; selected papers*, translated by J. E. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 1967), 44–81.
- 8 The main sources for the following come from the Triplex Confinium Research Project that has sponsored the following studies: *Microhistory of the Triplex Confinium* (Budapest: Central European University, 1998), D. Roksandić, N. Štefanec, eds., *Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium, 1700–1750*, (Budapest: Central European University, 2000).
- 9 For a social analysis of the Vlachs see N. Moacanin, "Introductory Essay on an Understanding of the Triple-Frontier Area: Preliminary Turkologic Research," in D. Roksandić, *Microhistory*, 126–35.
- 10 D. Roksandić, "Stojan Jankovic in the Morean War, or of Uskoks, Slaves and Subjects," in D. Roksandić, N. Štefanec, *Constructing Border Societies*, 248.
- 11 S. Lazanin, D. Roksandić, "J.W. Valvasor and J. Rabatta on the Croatian Military Borders in 1689 and 1719. Stereotypes and Mentality in the Triple Frontier. Comparative Perspectives," in D. Roksandić, *Microhistory*, 102–05.
- 12 K. Kaser, *Freier Bauer und Soldat. Die Militarisierung der agrarischen Gesellschaft an der Kroatish-Slawonischen Militargrenze (1535–1881)* (Wien: Böhlau, 1997), 63–66
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- 63 F. W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 397.
- 64 Ibid., 559.
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- 68 P. Crossley, *The Manchus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997); idem., *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in the Transformations of Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); E. S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors. A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
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As the title of the book implies, the authors are agreed in rejecting any uniform definition or even of a strict typology of empires. The question being asked determines the imperial alignment. It should also be clear from these essays that national historical narratives of Germany, Spain or Russia (and one could easily add France and Britain) have systematically marginalized the imperial dimensions of their histories. Finally, the essays suggest that empires were more adaptive and resilient to change than it has been commonly thought. The fact that the incantation of “decline and fall” is nowhere invoked should signal that a seismic shift is under way in the historiography pointing toward a further investigation of the elements of survival, renewal and adaptation of the patterns of imperial rule.

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